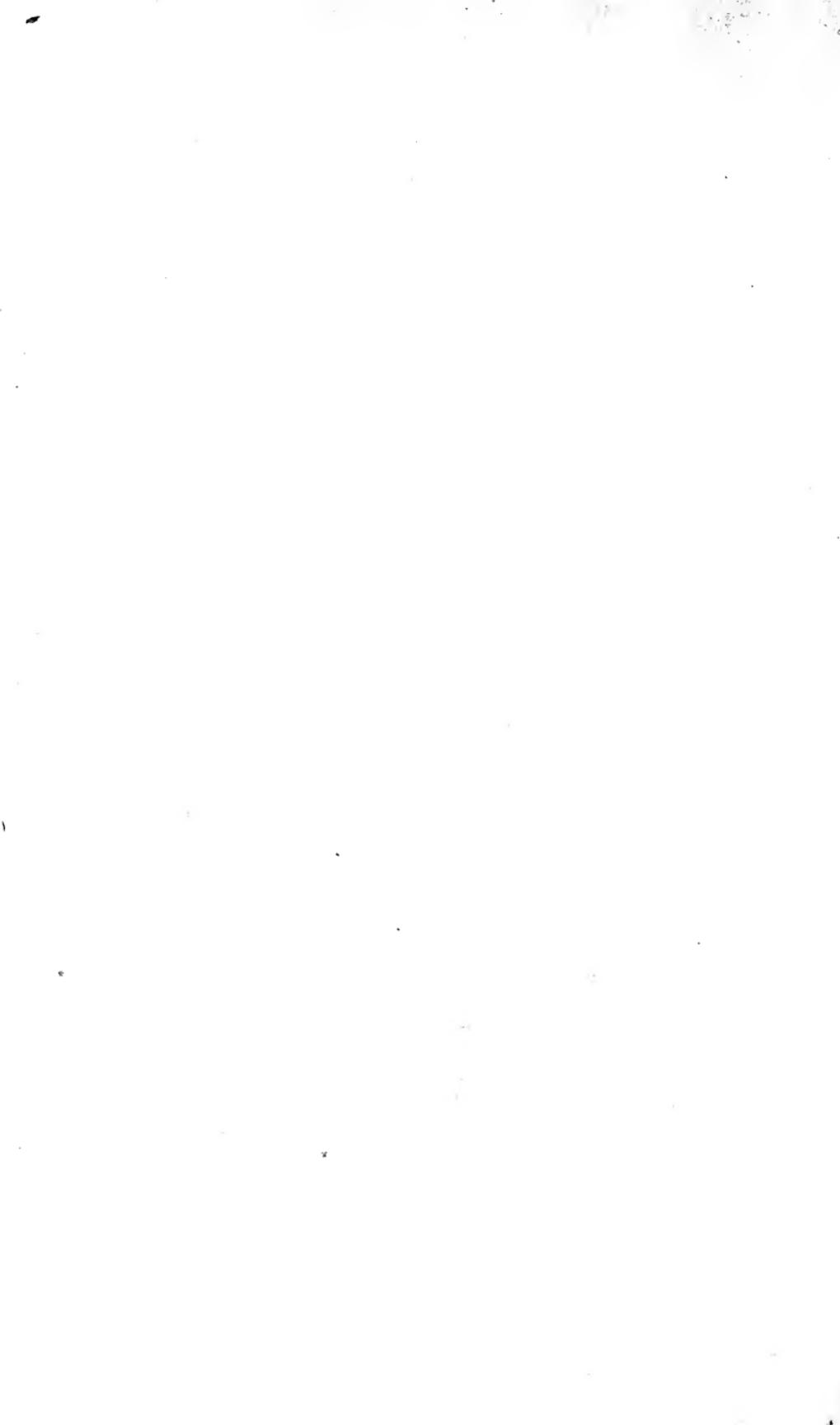




406.

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A N  
E S S A Y  
ON THE  
P R O P E R L E S S O N S,

Appointed by the LITURGY of the

CHURCH of ENGLAND,

To be Read on SUNDAYS and Chief FESTIVALS,  
throughout the Year,

As they are directed by her Table of PROPER LESSONS.

To which are prefixed,

P R E F A C E S,

Pointing out the Design of the respective LESSONS.

Together with

Such REFLECTIONS on the several Passages contained  
therein, as may serve to enforce the Duties and Doctrines  
propounded to our Faith and Practice.

A N D A L S O,

Some EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The WHOLE

Intended for assisting the Judgment and Devotion of the serious  
Members of our Church in Hearing and Reading the said Lessons.

---

By WILLIAM WOGAN, Esq;  
Late of EALING in Middlesex.

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In FOUR VOLUMES.

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VOL. I

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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*He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto  
the Churches.* Rev. iii. 22.

*Hear the Church.* Matt. xviii. 17.

*To the Law, and to the Prophet.* Isa. viii. 20.

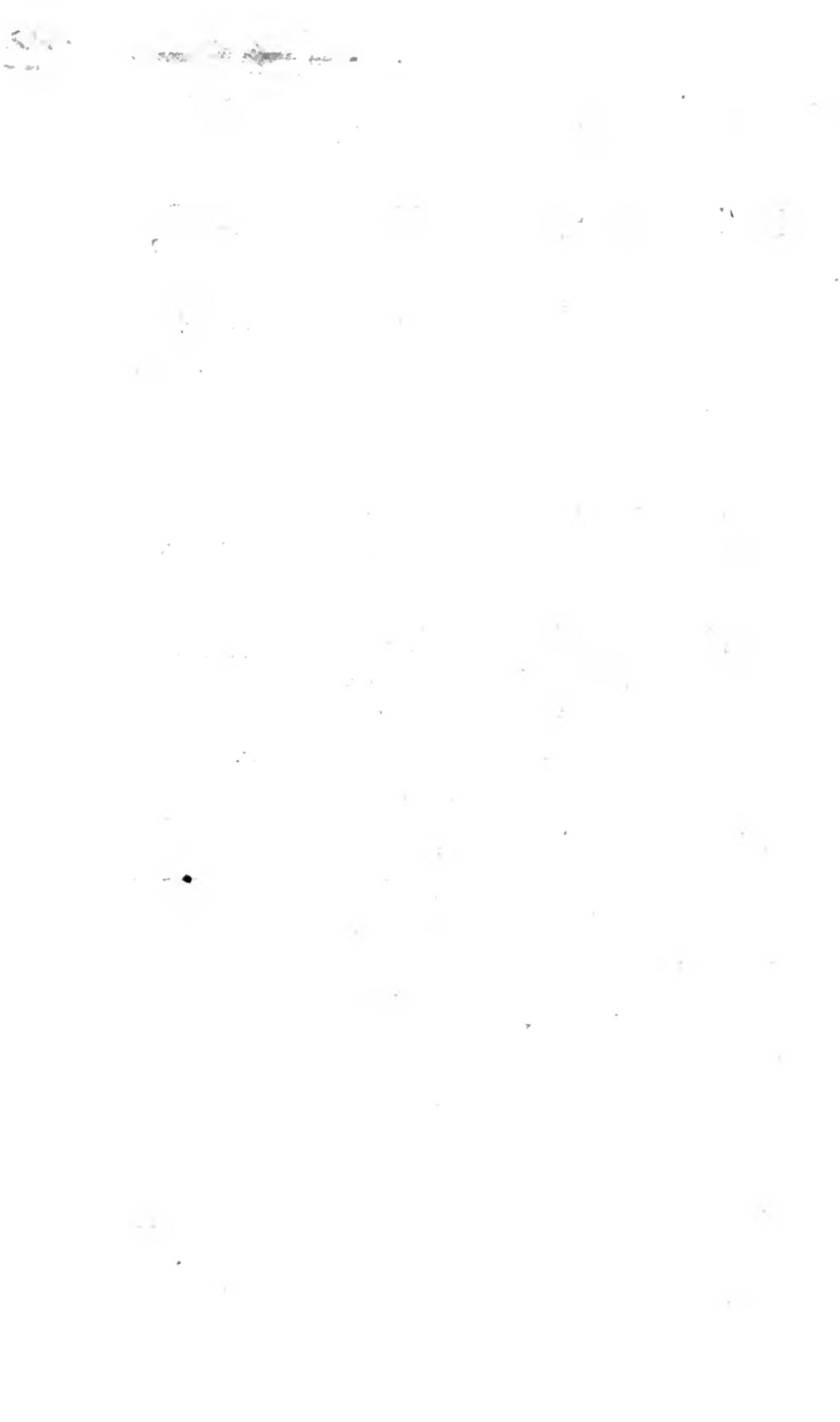
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M,DCC,LXV.



T O  
The M ost R EVEREND,  
The R I G H T R EVEREND,  
A N D  
The R EVEREND,  
**The C L E R G Y**  
O F T H E  
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*,  
W I T H  
All the Faithful M EMBERS of the same,  
**T H I S ESSAY**  
O N H E R  
**P R O P E R L E S S O N S**  
I S  
Most humbly Dedicated, by  
**The Author.**

## IV. CONCLUSION

6. *Leucosia* *leucostoma* *leucostoma* *leucostoma*

$\tau = \tau_0$        $\tau = \tau_0 + \Delta\tau$

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## Wendy Island 67

10. *Leucosia* *leucostoma* *leucostoma* *leucostoma*

# INTRODUCTION;

O R,

## GENERAL PREFACE

To the following

E S S A Y:

W H E R E I N

Some Advices are humbly offered to the Readers  
of our Lessons; and likewise, to such as shall  
be disposed to peruse the Comments or Reflections  
thereon with a candid and serious frame of mind.

**H**A VING often reflected upon the order  
and design of the Church of *England*, in the  
choice of her *Proper Lessons*, I as often wished  
some able hand had undertaken, or would undertake,  
to explain the use of those Lessons in such a manner,  
as might at once do justice to the piety and wisdom of  
the Church, and likewise stir up the minds of her  
members to improve such her design to their spiri-  
tual advantage.

Vot. I.

a

Many

Many excellent pens have laboured to explain the use of her *Festivals* and *Fasts*; some have also employed much laudable pains in expounding the *Epistles* and *Gospels*; but this work of illustrating the *Proper Lessons* hath not, as yet, that I know of, been taken in hand; or, at least, been treated in a manner so full and satisfactory as the importance of the subject seems to require.

'Tis true, many of the Proper Lessons are so aptly chosen, that the reason of such choice may, at first view, appear to all that consider it with any attention: But the generality of people seem to have but little apprehension of the usefulness or fitness of them; and thereby lose the benefit, and even the pleasure, which they would otherwise reap thereby.

In treating hereof, it seems necessary to consider;

I. The Original, whence our Church derives this her practice of intermixing portions of Scripture with her public service.

II. The Reason, why she stiles these portions, *Lessons*, and *Proper Lessons*; and wherein they differ.

III. The Intention and Design of the Church, in appointing *Proper Lessons*;—their singular use and benefit.

IV. Some Reflections on the Manner of Reading them.

*First*, As to the *Original* of our Church's practice in appointing of *Lessons* to be part of her public service, we might go back as far as the original of the Sacred Cannon of Scripture; for if the book of *Job* was the first extant, and published (as some think) by *Moses*, for the use and benefit of the Church; it was, doubtless, a most proper Lesson for the then state and condition of the *Israelites* under their sufferings

ings and afflictions in *Egypt*, and afterwards in the Wilderness.—When, after this, the same inspired author had written his five books, which we call the *Pentateuch*, what was the book of *Deuteronomy* but a kind of prelude to the Gospel, and an apposite emblem of our second Lesson, not only as it is, for the most part, an exposition of the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments, but, chiefly, as it gives us the spiritual and evangelical interpretation of the mysteries veiled in the ceremonial part of the levitical law; and, therefore, was as necessary for all the people of the *Jewish* Church to hear or read, as it is for us Christians to have Lessons set us out of the New Testament, after we have heard one out of the Old.

Thus stood the Canon for many years, except we add the book of *Joshua*, and perhaps *Judges* and *Ruth*. And this was all the Scripture, which *David* so often celebrates in his Psalms, as his daily study and delight.—After the return of the *Jews* from their captivity, God was pleased to stir up the spirit of *Esdras*, to collect and revise the Sacred Canon (which by that time had been compleated by the addition of the *Psalms* and the *Prophets*,) and, probably, in his time, or soon after, was introduced the custom of reading them at all their publick meetings.—That the Scriptures were divided into Lessons, and that the custom was, on the Sabbath Days, to read a select portion out of the law (or books of *Moses*,) and another out of the Prophets, appears from sundry passages in the New Testament.—The reading out of *Moses*, or the Law, was their *First* Lesson; and the voices of the Prophets (which were [also] read every Sabbath Day<sup>3</sup>) was their *Second*.

This method then was the established practice of the *Jewish* Church in our Saviour's time, and in the

<sup>3</sup> *Acts* xiii. 27.

time of his Apostles; a practice our Lord often honoured with his presence, and always joined in; a practice, to which the usage of our own Church is exactly conformable. And indeed, if we compare the whole synagouge-service with ours in the Church of *England*, we shall find the frame and model of both to be perfectly alike. The synagouge-service consisting, as ours doth, of forms of prayer, and two Lessons; and afterwards a discourse or sermon, when any that was a *Rabbi* or teacher was present, and had any word of exhortation for the people.

Thus we see the use of reading the Scriptures, and that too by way of *Lessons*, in the public service, grew up by degrees from small beginnings, till it became the constant and standing order of the *Jewish* Church. Thus it certainly was in our Saviour's time; and his presence and practice sufficiently evidenced his approbation<sup>b</sup>. No wonder then the Christian Church borrowed this, with many other liturgical rites and customs, from the *Jewish*, and adopted the use of reading in the Scriptures, by way of *Lessons*, into her public service; with this variation only, that she takes her First Lesson out of the Old Testament, and her Second out of the New.

That this became an early usage to the Christian Church, and probably as soon as the Canon of the New Testament was settled, appears from many of the antient fathers; namely, *Justin Martyr*, *Cassian*<sup>c</sup>, *Chrysostom*, St. *Augustin*, &c. as cited by *Sparrow*, *Comber*, *Nicholls*, and others. And as this observation cannot but give great satisfaction to the members of

<sup>b</sup> See *Luke* iv. 16.

<sup>c</sup> *Cassian's* testimony is very remarkable and express.—*Post Psalmos due lectiones, Veteris scilicet & Novi Testamenti singulæ subsequuntur. Qui modus antiquitus idcirco per tot saecula intemeratus nunc usque perdurat, quia non humana adinventione statutus, &c.* *Cassian, de institut. mon. L. ii. c. 4.*

our Church; so ought it to undeceive the prejudice of her opposers, when they observe her treading in the steps of God's people in all ages, and conforming herself to the very example of *Christ*, while he was upon earth, and that of his Church in the first and purest times. Nay, we may add, that by her reformation from the Church of *Rome*, she has not only restored the primitive custom, which the *Romish* church had depraved; but, in some degree, has improved the method used by the primitive Church in the choice of her Lessons; as every candid observer, who shall examine the rule she has prescribed by her tables and kalendar, must readily acknowledge.

*Secondly*, The Reason, why our Church calls some of these portions of Scripture *Lessons*, and others *Proper Lessons*, is next to be considered.

As the followers of Christ are styled, in the *Gospel*, his *disciples*, that is to say, his scholars, the inference to be made is natural and plain, that we should consider him as our *teacher*; ourselves as *learners*; and the Church as his *school*.

The book, which he hath given us to read and learn in this school, is agreed, on all hands, to be the **BIBLE**: But the province of dividing his word aright, and distributing their portions severally to every one as he needeth, he hath committed to his Church; and she, by her wise scribes, who have been instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, bringeth forth, out of these treasures, things new and old<sup>d</sup>.—The originals of these Sacred Writings, are the authentic records from whence she draws her doctrines, and proves them by, and may well be called her *old things*: The translation thereof, as made by herself, may as properly be called her *new*: These she divides into

<sup>d</sup> *Mat.* xiii. 52.

several portions, for every day throughout the year. Those, which she hath appointed for common days, she simply calls *Lessons*; such as are for high days, the *Sundays* and *Festivals*, she stiles *Proper Lessons*: And, for our direction herein, has compiled those tables prefixed to her Liturgy for the latter, and a monthly kalender for the other.

*Thirdly*, As to the Church's *Intention* herein, we cannot but observe, on view of the said table and kalender, together with what is said in her Preface concerning the Service of the Church, what singular care she hath taken, that the Word of God shall be faithfully dispensed to the people.—The Scriptures appointed, by the kalender, to be read throughout the year, being for *common* or *week days*, the Church, as we said before, calls them only *Lessons*; but on *Sundays* and *Holidays*, the peculiar sanctity of those days requiring a more particular attention, she calls the *Lessons* appointed for that use *PROPER Lessons*, and has framed two tables accordingly, one for the *Sundays*, and the other for *Holidays*.

The wise *Design* of the Church herein will further appear, if we consider the nature and design of divine worship in general; especially of the public service, which is an holy intercourse between God and man. For carrying on this sacred intercourse between God and his Church, she hath provided a well digested form, that so, when we are going to the House of Prayer, we may *take with us words* (as God himself commands we should, *Hof.* xiv. 2.) and at the same time the great God of heaven is pleased also to bring with him words; the Church, in her *Lessons*, pointing them out to the Reader who officiates. To shew the propriety of which choice is the design of the *Prefaces* prefixed to the several *Lessons*.

Some men seem to think our service to be imperfect, except there be a *sermon*; and therefore slight the sacred office, when there happens to be none. But who so favours the things that be of God more than those that be of men, will reason quite otherwise; and be persuaded, that the word of God, which our Church so rightly divides to us, is the best *sermon*, and infinitely preferable to that of men, whose finest compositions are but a dead letter, a painted flame, in comparison of the *living oracles* of God, which carry life and spirit in them beyond all human oratory.—And surely, no man, that considers this, can be so profane, as to prefer sermons to our Lessons; or so careless to attend to them, as the manner of too many is, when they hear them read.—Had this note sufficient weight to convince such as are fond of sermons, that our Church is far from meriting any blame on that head, it might serve likewise to obviate that other objection, which is levelled against her Liturgy, and all prescript *forms of prayer*. In the Lessons, God is pleased to speak to us in the *self-same* words; year by year condescending to bring with him words, and speak to us in the very *same form*, whenever these several Scriptures are read in our ears: And can it appear reasonable or decent, that man should presume to address him in the unpremeditated and extemporaneous effusions? Should not we much more take *with us* words, words which we have preconceived, well weighed, and digested beforehand, when we approach the divine majesty, lest we be *rash with our mouth, and our heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, and to give the sacrifice of fools, not considering that we do evil*?—God hath thought fit to give us a fixed and settled *form* in writing<sup>f</sup>, when he speaks to us; and shall not we fol-

<sup>e</sup> *Eccles.* v. 2.

<sup>f</sup> See *Isa.* xxx. 8. *Now go, write it before them in a table, or note it in a book; that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever.* See likewise *Deut.* xxxi. *Jerom.* xxx. *Habak.* ii. *Rev.* i. 11.

How the divine example, when we come to speak to him in prayer? Or shall it be charged as a fault on our Church, that she has followed the divine example, in that she has reduced to writing her form of sound words, and obtained a law (the act of uniformity) to fix and establish the same? May we not presume that one great end, among many others, why God was pleased to deliver his word to his Church in writing, and even to engrave his law with his own hand upon stone, and then to seal up the prophesy with a severe interdiction, that "none should ever add thereto, nor "take away," was this, That he might restrain that vain spirit of curiosity, and hunting after novelty, which men are naturally so fond of? This precedent our holy mother has piously observed, and transcribed into her own practice: She has also committed to writing not only her Rituals and Forms of Devotions, her Articles and Canons, her offices for Ordination, &c. and her Homilies, but a translation of the Holy Bible, for the common use of all her members.—And, to prevent any alterations, or disagreement, in the reading of Holy Writ, she leaves not even to her ministers, much less to her people, or any unauthorized teachers, the choice of what parts of Scripture they please to read in the public congregation; but, by an authentic *table* and *kalendar*, dictates the portions that are to be read.—Thus treading in God's own steps, she leads her children in God's way, and, in an holy concurrence with the Divine Will and Wisdom, labours to cure the itching ears of carnal men, and to correct that vitiated taste, which loads the heavenly manna, for no other reason, but because it is *every day* dispensed, and *every year* the *same*.

Why all are called *Lessons* we have seen before; why some are called *Proper Lessons* comes next to be enquired. This term of distinction may be taken

two ways ; either with reference to the purport and design of the particular day or festival which we are called upon to celebrate ; *i. e.* when the subject of the Lesson corresponds to the occasion of the solemnity ; or, in regard to some higher and more general end, which the Church had in view in making the choice. When the tenour of the Lesson answers apparently to the Church's design in either of these respects, it will easily be deemed and allowed to be *Proper*. But the first note of distinction will not always hold ; for although there appear an evident relation and agreement between the design of the great festivals of *Christmas*, &c. and between the subjects of the Lessons chosen on those occasions ; yet this doth not so plainly appear, with respect to the Lessons for the *Saints Days*, except in very few. Consequently we may presume, that the Church had in her eye, what we have called an higher and more general and comprehensive design, in all those Lessons which she has called *Proper*. To find out this, and discover the reason of such propriety, is surely the duty, and must be the wisdom, of every ingenuous son of our holy and most excellent Church. But as none of our ritualists, I have yet seen<sup>h</sup>, have entered upon this subject, nor attempted to illustrate the *propriety* of the Sunday and Festival Lessons ; neither hath the Church herself taken so particular notice thereof, as to inform us, in express terms, of her reasons for so distinguishing them from the common Lessons ; it is with fear and trembling, that I take upon me to tread this unbeatened path. But this must rather be referred to the ensuing Prefaces, as the occasion or seasons of the year may require.

And now, having noted with all possible brevity, what our Church means and intends by her appoint-

<sup>h</sup> The Rev. and pious Mr. *Reading* has published a set of sermons on the Proper Lessons of the Church, but without any professed regard to their *propriety*.

ment of Lessons; it may not be amiss to observe, that by her choosing one out of the Old Testament, and the other out of the New, she seems constantly to have her eye on the two covenants made with man; namely, that of the *first*, (or covenant of works) as contained in the *Old Testament*; that of the *second* (as exhibiting to us the covenant of grace) in the *New*: By this wise method the Law or voice of justice, and the Gospel or glad tidings of peace and salvation, are daily set before us; that so, on one hand, we may be warned to avoid the punishment of divine wrath; and, on the other, be animated with the hopes and promise of mercy.

*Fourthly*, Of the WAY and MANNER of Reading the Lessons.

In the next place, if it may not be thought too assuming, I would humbly offer a few considerations to our Readers, with regard to the *Manner of Reading* the Lessons.

The word *Lesson* intimating to us (as was observed before) that we ought to consider ourselves as *disciples* of Christ, or learners, and the Church as our *school*; that hither we come to be instructed in the science of the Christian Religion; and taught both what we ought to know, and do, for our soul's health: The very word, I say, suggesting this to us; does not the nature, and moral fitness of the thing require that the *Reader*, when he is to *give out* these appointed portions of God's holy Word, should stile them, as the Church herself has stiled them, namely, LESSONS, if on common days; and PROPER LESSONS, on the Sundays and Festivals; that so the congregation, being duly apprized of the distinction, may regard it as a summons to a more heedful attention: These considerations, and the reasonableness of it, might be sufficient to enforce and regulate

late the practice. And perhaps the Church, presuming on her Reader's judgment, thought it unnecessary to be more explicite. It is a general practice, when the Church has appointed *Proper Psalms*, on particular occasions, for the Reader to call and name them so : When *Lessons*, on common days, or *Proper Lessons* on Sundays or Festivals, are appointed, why should they not be called by the name, which the Church has given them in her tables ?—But of this enough; and, perhaps, too much, when I am striving against the stream of practice which now so generally prevails : And who am I, that I should attempt to stem it ?

—Howbeit, it may not be improper to add (in confirmation of the antiquity of this practice in the Church (what we find in *Nicholls's* additional notes on the words in the Rubric now in question, and cited by him from an old expositor). “ Why, in giving out the *Lessons*, is it the constant custom to name the title of the Book ? The answer is, Because there come to Church many plain country people, who know not the author of the *Lesson*, nor whence it is taken, except they be told it.”

—Proceed we next to consider, the MANNER of reading the *Lesson*.—This also is suggested, both by their names, and sacred contents; to wit, that they ought to be read with a becoming seriousness and gravity, as well as clearly, distinctly, and audibly ; whereas, to read them otherwise, with precipitation or levity, with a muttering voice, or uncouth tone, is not only to profane and depreciate them, as they are a part of God's holy Word, but to defeat the very end and purpose for which, as *Lessons*, they were

\* Hugo Victorinus querit cur in lecternis semper pronuntiantur titulus auctoris aut libri ; et responderet, ut nullum convenire queque bubulas, qui nesciunt de auctore, nisi docerantur.

appointed and designed.—But that theatrical way, which of late years has been introduced, is a great indecorum, and highly offensive to every pious ear.—The Church is confessedly the House of God; it must therefore be preposterously indecent and profane, to bring the play-house into the Church, and to pronounce the blessed Word of God with such an accent, as if the speakers therein were only so many persons acting their parts upon a stage.—Some Readers offend greatly in this point: Nay, some, through ignorance of the sense, and misplacing the emphasis, either give a wrong meaning to the Divine Word, or turn it into burlesque or nonsense, and thereby expose both themselves, and the blessed Word of God to contempt.—But still there is another sort of reading, which sinks even below the theatrical, and that is, by mutilating the words into low and vulgar abbreviations, or using such odd tones of voice, as the natural good sense of the Reader would be ashamed of in reading a common news-paper.

To avoid these very faulty extremes, several rules might be laid down with respect to the most *proper manner* of reading the Lessons. But, no rules will be of any avail, except that spirit of indevotion, which lies at the root, can be removed. When their own reason and more serious consideration have taken place, then (as Solomon speaks) *The heart will teach the mouth, and add learning to the lips*<sup>k</sup>. Howbeit, permit me to offer some short advices in relation to *reading the Lessons* in the most accurate manner: These seem naturally to fall under those three heads, *Grammar*, *Good Sense*, and *Devotion*.

As to *Grammar*; not only the right pronunciation of words, but the proper quantity of such as consist of more syllables than two, are carefully to be observed. Mistakes herein happen chiefly in proper names.—

<sup>k</sup> Prov. xvi. 23.

All languages have their fixed idioms in accenting their words; and an impropriety herein, or mispronouncing the quantity of syllables, is no less grating to the ear, than a wrong note in music; and will be deemed as inexcusable in a person pretending to a liberal education, as the mistaking one note for another would be in a musician.—Some may look on these things, in relation to syllables and quantities, as trifles, and beneath their notice: But, even these *little things* are not to be despised; nor, indeed, is any thing to be accounted *little*, that relates to the service and word of the Most High God.

With reference to *Good Sense* (the second requisite qualification in the *manner* of reading,) it is presumed the reader's own judgment will direct him; especially if he hath before hand made himself master of the purport and meaning of the contents, and keeps to a plain, but significant delivery, equally avoiding all disagreeable monotonies, and affected elevations of voice. And here it may not be amiss to advertise the use of the *paragraphical note* [¶] which so often occurs at the begining of some verses in almost every chapter of our Bibles. This mark is to denote to us, where the paragraph, or any new contents, begin— As the division of our chapters into verses had broken and confused the order and right structure of the paragraphs, the Church, with great care and wisdom, hath distinguished the proper sections by this mark [¶], which, if attended to, will be of singular help to the reader, as well as to any student, of the Holy Scriptures; and consequently, in a great measure, remedy that inconvenience which Mr. *Locke* and others complain of, on account of their being divided or (chopped and minced, as their word is) into *chapters* and *verses*.

As to the article of *Devotion* (the third head of advice in forming the most accurate manner of reading); this

this may be practised in the Lessons, as well as in the Prayers of the Church, though with some difference: A serious mind, and a due reverence to the Divine Word, will naturally tune the voice to the language of the heart, and create an harmony in both. A devout spirit, like a good ear in music, will not only regulate the *time*, but give such proper *graces* to the voice, as cannot but charm and affect the hearers; and prove the best means of kindling their devotions to join with greater warmth and affections in the public prayers.

Before we dismiss this head of the Manner of Reading the Lessons there is one thing more that seems necessary to be considered; and that is, the case of such Readers as read *wrong*, and therefore *improper*, instead of *Proper*, Lessons; and this is done sometimes by *mistake*, and sometimes *designedly*.

By *mistake*,—we mean not a simple error, mistaking one chapter or lesson for another: This may happen to any one through inadvertency, or a mere oversight which, though a fault, is a very pardonable one: But we mean such a mistake, as proceeds from a plain neglect of the order set down in the Table of Lessons, or of the design of the Church, and the reason of the thing, where the order is less explicate and plain. The first of these mistakes happens commonly towards the conclusion of the *Trinity Season*: The number of Sundays before *Advent*, varying every year, has occasioned some kind of difficulty among common Readers. The *table* provides for *twenty-six Sundays after Trinity*; but although the Rubric just before *Advent* be plain enough, and that the direction extends only to the *Collect*, *Epistle*, and *Gospel*, for such Sundays, yet some readers, misapprehending the Rubric, include the *Lesson* also, as if *that* were to be borrowed from the *Epiphany Sunday*, as well as the *Collect*, *Epistle*, and *Gospel*: Whereas the Church mentions

mentions nothing of that; neither does she need to borrow any *Lessons* from thence, having, as we said, provided for a course of Lessons, as far as the Twenty-sixth *Sunday* inclusive.

Some again, when the Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth, or Twenty-fifth, *Sunday* has happened to be the *last* of that season, have read the Lesson for the Twenty-sixth, because that is set down the last in the table.

But, however light these mistakes may seem to some, it cannot but give offence to those who have a zeal for uniformity, and observe the disagreement of Readers on this occasion; some reading one Lesson, and some (in different places) another, for the same time; which ought not to be done.

What Lessons are proper to be read, when there happens to be a Twenty-seventh *Sunday* after *Trinity*, is, indeed, a question of more difficulty, because the Rubric seems defective, or rather obscure: But this is endeavoured to be answered in Vol. iv. of this *Essay*, p. 600.

As to those, who *designedly* read wrong Lessons, and *wilfully* depart from the order of the Church, this must be owned to carry in it no small fault, as well as mistake. *First*, It is an offence against the apostolick precept of *Rule* and *Order*<sup>1</sup>, which ought more especially to be observed in the public service of God; and a direct breach of that *uniformity* which the Church, in pursuance of that Divine Canon, has prescribed; and which hath been established by the law of the land; the *Tables*, which appoint the Lessons, being part of the *Act of Parliament* by which the form of the Common Prayer, in all its parts, is authorized

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

and confirmed; and severe sanctions and penalties are enacted against those who shall deprave the same; or who, in reading thereof, shall not conform IN ALL POINTS to things therein appointed and prescribed, according to the purport, true intent, and meaning, of the said act.—Here then is no room left for innovation or alteration in any point of the public service whatsoever; consequently, no liberty is allowed to any Reader of the Common Prayer, to change or vary any of the Lessons appointed by the *Tables* and *Kalendar of the Church*. And, that this may not appear a disquisition wholly groundless, the particular instances are thrown into the margin<sup>m</sup>, wherein, I humbly conceive, the Church's order is infringed; nor can it well be justified, notwithstanding the answers which some have offered in excuse of this liberty.

One excuse is, That they apprehend the subject of some of those Lessons (referred to in the margin) is offensive to modest ears, and therefore not so fit to be publicly read. But, who made such men judges? Is not such an affected modesty an open reproach on the wisdom, as well as order, of the Church and her governors, who have appointed these Lessons to be read on those days? Is it not setting themselves up to be wiser than their teachers? Nay, doth it not seem an imputation on the holiness, as well as wisdom, of God himself, who has thought fit to dictate those

<sup>m</sup> See both acts of uniformity; see also Canon iv. and v.

<sup>n</sup> *Afb Wednesday* falling on the 11th Feb. in the year 174<sup>4</sup>, instead of the xviii. and xix. chap. *Leviticus*, which are the First Lessons appointed by the *kalendar*, a Curate read the i. and ii. chap. of *Isaiah*. On the 12 Feb. 174<sup>1</sup>, another read *Levit.* xxi. instead of the xx; and the day before, in reading chap. xviii. omitted several verses.—The same Reader, on the 11 January 174<sup>2</sup>, 174<sup>3</sup>, 174<sup>4</sup>, in reading Gen. xix. omitted the history of *Lot's* daughters incest, from ver. 31 to the end.—This passage, having been objected to by some heretics in the primitive times, is justified and explained, as of mystical import, by St. *Ireneus*, edit. *Grabe*, p. 353; and likewise by St. *Chrysostom*, on the same reasons.

passages to his Church, and make them parts of the Holy Scripture; all of which (even every part of them) were *given us by inspiration of God, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.*—Doubtless our Church, which *translated* these passages, and *appointed* them to be read, takes them in this light, as very fit and necessary for the people to know and hear.—*To the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled,* Tit. i. 15.—Mr. Parker's answer to Whiston's objection to the book of *Canticos*<sup>p</sup>, may likewise be applied to men of this false delicacy; “to censure or mutilate what has “been settled in the Church, is an immodesty much “beyond the reading what may be feared to give “offence.” p. 238.

Another excuse, for *changing* such Lessons, is taken from the book of *Homilies*.—But to this it may be answered: *First*, That this argument for such liberty is not taken from the body of our Homilies, but from an admonition prefixed thereto, when it was published in 1562. So that it can amount only to a recommendation or permission, which perhaps might be of use to the infant state of the Reformation; but is not a command or injunction established by any law, consequently not of authority equal to a standing law, the *Act of Uniformity*.—Our Liturgy, and particularly the *Kalendar* and *Table* of Lessons, have undergone divers reviews since those days, and every thing contained therein hath been so fixed and determined by subsequent acts and laws *now* in force, that no reader can reasonably suppose, under the present sanctions, that he is left at liberty to *change* any of the appointed Lessons at his pleasure, and to plead that *admonition*

<sup>o</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>p</sup> See Parker's occasional annotation on *Leviticus*.

(which is now antiquated) against so many solemn and still subsisting engagements.

Under this head of *voluntary mistakes*, there are two more which we humbly conceive to be so ; and shall mention them as briefly as may be : The first is, reading on *Ashwednesday* some other chapter than happens to be set down in the *Kalendar* ; and proceeds, we presume, on a supposition that the order of the Church is deficient in not appointing a *Proper Lesson* for *Ashwednesday*. But this charge of defectiveness in the service of the Church, will appear to have the less weight, if it be considered, that the whole preamble, wherewith she begins the *Commination Service* is, in strictness, the *Proper Lesson* which she seems to have intended for that day ; it being all (except the introduction) extracted, almost *verbatim*, from such passages of Holy Scripture, as do most aptly suit the occasion ; and, what appears still more to our purpose, it is obvious to observe, that the Proper Lessons, which the Church has, with such singular judgment and wisdom, appointed for the three preceding *Sundays of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima*, are certainly the fittest and most Proper Lessons that could be chosen, to prepare us for the particular service of *Ashwednesday*, and indeed for the whole *Lenten Fast*.<sup>q</sup>

The next observation, we have to make, is humbly submitted to the better judgment of others to determine whether it be a mistake or not. Whenever a *Saint's-day* falls upon a *Sunday*, the question is, which Lessons ought to take place ; those for the *Sunday*, or those for the *Holiday*?—That some days are *High Days*, is mentioned in Scripture, and allowed so to

<sup>q</sup> See the Preface to *Lessons for Septuages. Sunday*, and note (b). Vol. ii. p. 105.

ber: That the *Lord's Day* is the *higher* and more honourable than any other, will not, we presume, be denied. Yet we have often known the *Saint's* office, when falling upon *Sunday*, preferred to that of the *Lord's day*; not only the *Lesson* for the *Saint*, altho' out of the *apocryphal* book (which, by the way, the Church *never* appoints to be read *on the Lord's day*) but the whole service, *Epistle*, *Gospel*, and *Collect* for the *Sunday*, hath sometimes been quite excluded. And can it be reconciled to reason, or true piety, that *canonical* Scripture should give way to *apocryphal*, and the *Saint* take place of his *Lord* and master?

If *Christmas Day* indeed (and consequently *New-Year's-Day*) happen to fall upon a *Sunday*, the answer to this query will admit of small difficulty; especially as their Proper *Lessons* are all taken out of the *Canonical* Scripture: And it seems highly reasonable, that *these* days, tho' falling on the *Sunday*, should have their whole service of *Lessons*, *Collects*, *Epistles*, and *Gospels* full and complete, without any mixture: That so the unity of action (as it may be called) may not be broken by the omission of any part of the respective services for either day.

It may, perhaps, be expected, that I should give some account of the *design* of this work, and the *method* I have used.—As to the *first*, the sole view and intention I had in studying the *Proper Lessons* of our Church, and commenting thereon, was for my own private benefit, and the instruction of my family, being persuaded that nothing could be more useful and instructive in order to that good end, nor any thing more seasonable (especially on the *Sunday* evenings) than to meditate on, and gain a right understanding of, the *Lessons* for the day.—This may suffice to shew

\* *John* xix. 31. See also *Eccl*us xxxiii. 7, 8, 9.      \* See a note on this case in *Nichol's* additional notes, p. 76. Att. 4.

the *design* of this work : By degrees, and in a course of above twenty years, it grew to be enlarged.—And who so shall take the hint, and think fit to follow this or the like plan, and *walk according to this rule* of the Church, may be assured they not only comply, in the strictest sense, with the command of our Lord, *Hear the Church*; but may likewise, with the like comfortable assurance, depend on that glorious privilege promised to his people, that, *They shall be all taught of God*<sup>t</sup>.

As to the *method* : I have, as far as I was able, followed that which appeared to be most agreeable and conducive to the design. In the *Prefaces* to the several *Lessons*, I have endeavoured to explain the design of the Church, and the wisdom and propriety of her choice. In the *Comments* thereon, I have kept as close as I could to the particular points, which the Church proposed and intended for our instruction on the respective *Sunday* or *Festival*. In the handling of these points my constant aim hath been, not only to enforce the great ends of religion in general; but kept always, as near as I could, to the particular doctrines, and avowed principles of the Church of *England*: And so much the rather, because too many, by forming their first studies on the systems of the *Genevan*, and other foreign, divines, and overlooking, or too slightly regarding, that best and completest body of divinity, which she has delivered to us, in what we call *her own books*, and especially in her excellent scheme of *Proper Lessons*, have in many things departed from her true and genuine principles, both with respect to her constitution and doctrines.—This unhappy leaven spreading like a leprosy, or gangrene, had, by degrees, so far infected not only the laity, but almost the whole body of our divines, in the last century; that, at length, it broke

<sup>t</sup> *John vi. 45.* See also *Isa. xliv. 13.*

out into dreadful commotions, which destroyed the public peace, order, and government of these kingdoms, both in Church and State—Nay, may we not reasonably presume, that those impure mixtures, which had adulterated the wholesome and primitive doctrines of our Church, was one of the chief causes, which provoked Almighty God to forsake her at that time, and deliver her up to a state of persecution, the most severe that ever happened, and endured for so long a space together, since the first ages of Christianity.—When this fearful visitation had, in some measure, purged our Church and Nation from that general hypocrisy and pretended holiness, on one hand, and that lukewarmness and defection from her original principles on the other, God was then pleased to restore her again to her former beauty and purity.—But now, alas! we are running into the same errors, and the same indifference again: And what have we to expect, but the like, nay, may we not justly fear, a worse, desolation? Enthusiasm, though under another name, is again breaking in upon us like a torrent; and not only vice and immorality, but downright atheism and infidelity, are even openly professed, and grown barefaced amongst us. And what is this deplorable decay of virtue and true religion owing to, but to the too common disregard of our *Lessons*? I cannot therefore forbear repeating, that if the common people could be persuaded, that the *Lessons* of our Church are the very *best sermons*, they would not lightly forsake the assembling themselves together, in God's own house, to hear them; nor run after disorderly, unlicensed teachers, who, contrary to the pious design of our Church, deprive themselves of the inestimable benefit of that provision she has made for their instruction.

It being very observable that the Church, in the choice of her Proper Lessons (out of the *Old Testament* especially) hath ever a principal view to the

*mystical* or spiritual, that is, the *evangelical*, sense; whether conveyed to us under the veil of allegory, history, type, or prophecy; it became necessary, in commenting thereon, to penetrate into the spirit or mystical meaning of the letter; yet no further than appeared consistent with, and might best serve, to illustrate the intention of the Church; as well as justify her choice, and consequently attain the full scope and right use, of the respective Lessons. I am not insensible, that now-a-days the *allegorical* interpretations of the Scripture are grown into disuse, nay, into a sort of discredit, and almost wholly discarded from our modern systems. But though, in former ages, some warm spirits carried them to exorbitant and unwarrantable lengths, and some have lately<sup>u</sup>, as well as in antient times<sup>v</sup>, excluded the truth and reality of the literal sense, and turned the whole into allegory; yet this ought not, in reason to prejudice any candid reader against *allegories* in general. The abuse of a thing is no good argument against the use: 'Tis certain, the Scriptures are not rightly intelligible without such expositions; and it is as plain that our Church not only maintains the verity of the letter, while she attends to the spiritual sense, but carries herself with admirable prudence and moderation between the two extremes.—How far I have herein done justice to the sense and wisdom of the Church, in the following Comments, must be submitted to the reader's judgment.—But methinks, a just treatise on the subject of *allegory* might be of incomparable use in divinity: At present I shall only note, in defence of a modest use of allegories, that it may be sufficient to refer the reader to what St. Paul hath said in his epistle to the *Galatians*, ch. iv.

<sup>u</sup> *Woolston.*

\* *Philo Judæus*, in his tract of allegories, and his followers<sup>z</sup>; (See S. *Weesy* on *Job*, p. 41.)—But *Philo* is vindicated by Dr. *Mangey*, in the Preface to his late edition of that author.

ver. 21, &c. where we find a cluster of them produced, and expounded by authority of divine inspiration.—This most authentic precedent may serve to justify the like mystical interpretations, that may occur in the progress of this essay; especially if they appear consonant to the tenor of the Scripture, to the mind and design of the Church, and the proportion of faith.

In unfolding the *sense* of the Lessons, and especially the allegorical passages therein, I have chiefly followed the interpretation of the primitive and most orthodox Fathers of the Christian Church; it appearing very plain, that these were the lights our holy Church made use of, not only in reforming her public service and external polity, but in the expositions of Scripture, and thence extracting her whole system of divinity, both in doctrine and principles; but more especially in determining those points, which are the pure and essential fundamentals of our holy religion; in all which she most evidently agrees, both in her model and sentiments, with the pattern and sense of the Catholic Church, in its first and purest ages; as any candid person, who will be at the pains to examine and compare the same, cannot, we humbly think, but be sufficiently convinced. On such examination (and the stricter it were, the better) how beautiful and comely, how pure and holy, how glorious and excellent, *without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, would this our Church appear, did her children, at least her teachers, do her this piece of common justice, to make a fair comparison between her and the primitive Church! When I say *her*, I mean *herself*, as her form and doctrines are delineated to us in her *own* authentic writings, and exclusive of any particular systems, which keep not strictly to her principles. But this comparison, alas! is so little, or so seldom regarded, that the very Fathers, whose testimony and judgment she appeals to, for the genuineness of

of her reformation, and her conformity to the original plan of the Catholic Church, are now too generally laid aside. Although it may with great truth be affirmed, that the true and genuine theology of the Church of *England*, her orthodoxy, and perfect consistency in every part, cannot be rightly apprehended and understood without a judicious use of the Fathers, and some knowledge of the original languages of the holy Scriptures. A competent skill herein, if joined with humility and purity of mind, will shew, that *all* her *fresh springs* are immediately derived from these fountains. And while she keeps steady to the Word of God, as interpreted by the fathers, she will ever be the best and most impregnable bulwark of sound Christianity, against *Papery* and *Schism*, as well as against all the attacks of heresy and infidelity: Nor shall the gates of hell ever prevail against her, except her own sons forsake her doctrines, and give her up to her enemies.

We have dwelt the longer on this head, because every departure from *her*, either in principle or practice, seems chiefly owing to the want of due attention to her *Proper Lessons*. Had a just regard been paid to *these* oracles, and her wise and pious design in the choice of them been more constantly observed, we should, perhaps, never have heard of the wild sects, which have rent the unity, and defaced the beauty, of the best and purest part of the whole Catholic Church: And if ever these thick clouds of error and enthusiasm be dispersed, if ever the beauty and splendor of our *Jerusalem* be restored, the surest and most effectual way must be, to return to *her*, whom, in many things, we have grievously forsaken; if we *bear HER*, as dutiful children, and *obey HER* voice, as *Jacob* did the voice of his mother<sup>x</sup>; so, and so only, shall we obtain the blessing.—And O!

<sup>x</sup> Gen. xxvii. 13, 14.

that

that all, whom these things do principally concern, would lay them to heart, before it be too late, and our candlestick be removed out of its place!

To conclude; I cannot have a better second, both in defence of the Fathers, and the use of allegories, than the celebrated *Erasmus<sup>y</sup>*.

In the compliment and form of the Comments, I must not omit to acquaint the Reader, that I am often indebted to the labours of others; and hope it will be excused, that their names are not always mentioned, or the passages particularly refered to. And, as to the plan, I have, as near as I could, followed the advice of the great Lord Bacon, who, in his book concerning *the Advancement of Learning<sup>z</sup>*, recommends it as the best manner of interpreting Scripture, and reckons it among the *desiderata*, or things (then) wanting in the sytems of divinity.

Finally, in justification partly of myself, for taking upon me to handle so sacred, and so important a subject, according to the forementioned plan; and partly of our Holy Church, for dividing our year into so many solemn seasons of Religion, annexing proper offices thereto; permit me to refer the reader to an Essay of the *Messieurs du Port Royal* upon the *Fear of God*, wherein they mention such a practice of the Church, as of singular use to impress this fear on our minds, and as one of the means of grace afforded us, whereof God will demand a strict account.

“ The Church (say they) divides the whole year  
“ into several seasons of grace: The devotion of the  
“ faithful ought to follow its spirit, &c.”

<sup>y</sup> See his advice to the Reader of Scripture, in his *Enchiridion militis Christiani*

<sup>z</sup> P. 488. of the Latin edit. and 476. of the English edit. in fol.  
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If, in the course of these Essays, some repetitions occur, 'tis hoped the Reader will make the more candid allowance, when he considers that the work grew up by slow degrees, being at first intended only for *private* use, and the result only of *Sunday* Meditations; so that many avocations intervening, and the thread and series of composition being often interrupted, it is less to be wondered at, that the same thoughts should occur more than once.—But, if they happen to be reflections of use and importance, let the saying of one of the antients serve for a vindication, or, at least, for an excuse, *Nunquam nimis dicitur, quod nunquam satis discitur*: “ We can never say “ too much of those concerning points, which can “ never be too often learned.”

The author hath chosen to stile the following work an *Essay*, &c. that he may not appear to dictate to any; but rather that he may stir up some abler hand to pursue and execute a design, which seems so very useful, in a more masterly and perfect manner.—And, as he himself found so much comfort, and even instruction in these speculations, he cannot forbear closing this Introduction with the words of the pious *Origen*<sup>2</sup>: “ Where I find I have attained unto the “ literal sense of any part of the Divine Writings, “ then I think I have been spending One Day at the “ Well of Vision; if to the *spiritual*, then Two; if, “ moreover, to the *moral*, then Three. And, al- “ though I know it is impossible I should fathom the “ great deep of God’s Word, yet herein I meditate “ and exercise myself both day and night. I make it “ the business of my life to get the clearest and fullest “ light I can into this immense treasure of truth, “ not only by my own application and industry, but

<sup>2</sup> Hom. xi. on those words in Gen. xxv. *Isaac dwelt by the Well of Lahairoi, i. e. the Well of Vision.*

“ by

“ by that, which is more likely to take effect, my  
“ earnest address and petition to him that *teacheth*  
“ *man knowledge*: And so long as I do this, I look  
“ upon myself to dwell with Isaac, at the *Well of La-*  
“ *bairoi*.”—And, O may the Prayers I have offered  
up, and the tears, wherewith I have so often bedewed  
this work, *come up for a memorial before God!* Remember  
me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me  
[and all that love our Sion] according to the greatness  
of thy mercy<sup>b</sup>. Amen, Amen.

<sup>b</sup> *Nobem.* xiii. 22, 23.

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To the READERS of the following  
ESSAY.

SUCH as shall be disposed to peruse the same are humbly desired to divest their minds of all p rsonal prejudice towards the supposed Author, or the Sacred Subject which he has adventured to treat of. Surely all, who are of a truly candid spirit, and well-affected to the Church of *England* and our common Christianity, cannot but approve the attempt, as commendable at least, and worthy of some acceptance and good will, how slender soever and mean the performance may seem.—The Author can truly say, It was the advice and request of others, who had conceived an opinon of the general benefit of such a design, rather than any presumption of his own sufficiency, which prevailed with him to commit to public view, what he had intended only for his own private use. And, therefore, his answer and excuse shall be that of the writer of the Book of *Maccabees*; *If I have done well, and as fitting* (the Subject) *it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.* 2 Macc. xv. 30.

Some propositions<sup>c</sup> and sentiments, advanced in the Essay, will appear uncommon, and, perhaps, at first sight, startle the Reader; yet let not such opinions (though uncommon, and even exploded by some) be too lightly condemned, and without a serious examination: They are principles founded on the plain words of Holy Scripture, or deducible therefrom,

<sup>c</sup> The *Millennium*, or Christ's reign with his Saints upon earth; his local descent into hell; the *first* and *second* resurrection.

and therefore no novel doctrines: They were the professed and avowed tenets of the *Primitive Church*, consequently of our *Own* (as may sufficiently appear from the scope and design of her *Lessons*) and are therefore embraced, and most firmly believed by the Author, as undoubted truths. Howbeit, as some of them are matters of speculation, rather than *fundamentals*, or points of *absolute necessity*, the same is submitted to the judgment and consideration of the intelligent Reader.—The *fundamentals* of Christianity (as contained in our excellent *Catechism*) ought inviolably to be holden and maintained: But speculative opinions are to be admitted so far only, as they serve to confirm, or, at least, do not shake or weaken the foundation.

If any think the stile too low, and not spirited enough, this is freely confessed so to be; as partly owing to a want of that elegance of expression which some are greater masters of, and which our modern writers seem to affect so much; partly owing to design; the Author being more studious to suit his stile to the capacities of common Readers, than to entertain the fancy of such as seek amusement, more than instruction, or any spiritual profit.

To such as are seriously minded to peruse this *Essay*, with a desire of improvement, the following method of reading it may be of use:

On the first perusal of the work, carefully read over the whole Lesson as it stands in your Bible, and mark the contents; then read the Preface set before it in the *Essay*, in order to consider and observe, how far it answers to the contents and scope of the Lesson; and afterwards peruse the whole, as disposed in the Book, with the context and comment thereon. This method seems necessary, and of great use, on the *first* perusal

perusal of this, or any other religious treatise, in order to gain the true meaning of the author, and drift of the work, and to mark what may be amiss either in doctrine or expression.—This use of criticism is both necessary and just: But a spirit of candour, and the love of truth, are the best guides to direct the judgment aright.

On a subsequent perusal of the whole work (if judged worthy of a *second* reading) it is most adviseable to take the Lessons in *course*, according to the series and order of the days and times for which they are appointed by the Church.—To read them otherwise, and skipping here and there in a desolatory and rambling manner, may gratify an idle curiosity, but will neither inform the judgment aright, nor improve the mind.—This method of reading the Lessons in due *course* is earnestly recommended, not only as most *instructive* to the well disposed Reader, but as the best *key* to open both the literal and spiritual meaning of the Divine Word, and thereby do justice both to the Church, and the Author of the Essay.

As to the Clergy, who shall vouchsafe to peruse this work, the compiler prays leave to preface this declaration, That the publication hereof proceeded not from any fond pretence of setting up for a teacher: His first and principal end, in studying and meditating on the proper Lessons of our Church, was for his own private information, and that he might be the better enabled to instruct his Family. In publishing his thoughts to the world, he prays it may not be deemed an invasion of a province, which seems more properly to belong to our Divines. He affects not to be wiser than his teachers; he rather acknowledges, that whatever sound doctrine, or divine truths, may appear in these lucubrations, he owes them all, under God, to their instructions; and that his highest ambition is to be their *Bajulus* (as Lord Bacon's word is)

is) to be one of the poor *Nethinim* in their service, a *drawer of water and a bower of wood for the house of his God.* And if his weak but sincere endeavours shall stir up any abler hand, to *improve or amend* what is here offered and submitted to them, (and for that reason stiled an *Essay*) he shall esteem their admission of him as an inferior labourer under them, in building or repairing the sacred edifice of our Church, to be the greatest honour, and most ample amends for all the time and pains, and even expence, this work hath cost him.—May our Divines at least judge favourably of a poor *layman's* attempt, who hath listed himself in their service, and permit him to say with the poet,

— *Fungor vice cotis, acutum  
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi.  
Est aliquid prodire tenuis* —

The character of the present age was, in truth, no small discouragement to the publication; but a reverend divine turned this objection into an argument for it, as the very badness of the time seemed to render such a work the more needful, and most seasonable. To this the author submitted; and expecting neither profit nor praise from the world, commits it wholly to the blessing of heaven, in hopes it may do some good;—if not to this generation, yet (according to the words of the Psalmist<sup>c</sup>) *to them that shall come after, that they who shall be born may praise the Lord.* Amen, so be it'

*N. B.* This Essay on the *Lessons*, if it happen to be well executed; together with Dean Stanhope's Comment on the *Epistles and Gospels*; and Mr. Nelson's Treatise on the *Fasts and Festivals*, will furnish the Reader with a complete body of divinity, according to the doctrine of the Church of *England*.

<sup>c</sup> *Psalms cii.*

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C O L L E C T<sup>d</sup>

To be used before reading the PROPER LESSONS.

**B**L E S S E D Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesu Christ. *Amen.*

<sup>a</sup> For the Second Sunday in Advent.

A N

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A N  
E S S A Y  
ON THE  
PROPER LESSONS.

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*The First Sunday in Advent.*

P R E F A C E.

**I**T deserves our notice, that for the greater solemnity of the three principal festivals in the year, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday, the Church has appointed certain days to attend them; some to go before, and some to come after them. Before Christmas are appointed four Advent Sundays; so called, because the design of them is to prepare us for a religious commemoration of the Advent<sup>a</sup> or coming of Christ in the flesh, when he came to visit us in all humility; and likewise for his second Advent, when he shall come in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead.

The most effectual preparation for his last, as well as commemoration of his first coming, is carefully taught us by the church, in the several Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels, which with admirable propriety she hath chosen for

<sup>a</sup> From the Latin word *Adventus*, which signifies *coming*. The time of its institution appears to be very antient; because *Maximus Taurinensis*, who lived about the year 450 wrote a homily upon it.

her service, at this time of Advent; herein differing from all other accounts of time whatsoever. The reason of which seems plainly this; Because she does not number her days, nor measure her seasons, so much by the motion of the sun in the firmament, as by the course of her Lord and Saviour who is in heaven; beginning her liturgical year, and course of devotion, with Him who is the Sun of Righteousness, and who began about this time to arise upon the world with healing in his wings; and appeared as the day-star on high, to lighten them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. So that these Advent Sundays, preceding the nativity of our Lord, may be compared to the twilight, forebearing the approach of the sun. For this reason the Church most pertinently calls upon us, To arise, and cast away the works of darkness; not only all sin and wickedness, but our spiritual slumber, and sleep, and dreams; that is, all carnal security and vain amusements of this mortal life; and then (as faithful servants and soldiers of Christ) to put on the armour of light; ye to put on the Lord Jesus himself; that is, to dress our souls (now that we are to arise) in his robes of righteousness and true holiness.

### The First Sunday in ADVENT.

#### The Proper Lesson for morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. i.

*A call to repentance: Offers of pardon and grace: Judgments denounced against the impenitent.*

1. **T**HE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

**T**HE vision, that is, the revelation of the will of God, which was made known to Isaiah, by the holy spirit of prophecy, concerning the spiritual circumstances of the Jewish church in

in the reigns of *Uzziah*, &c. to wit, for the space of near a whole century.—And not to that church and people only did this *vision* pertain, but extends to the christian church also, the new *Jerusalem*; and to us in particular of this nation, who have more than reason enough to apply to ourselves this solemn call to repentance, according to the pious design of our church, in appointing it for one of her lessons for this day.

*2. Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

The first sound of the gospel by St. John the *Baptist*<sup>a</sup>, was a summons to repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was then at hand: Even so here, the evangelical prophet calls upon us likewise to prepare,

by a timely repentance, for the coming of our *LORD*.—*Hear, O my soul, and awake from the dead sleep of sin: Shall the heavens hear, and the earth give ear to this trump of God, and thou remain deaf and insensible? Hear now, and arise to life: Accomplish this thy first resurrection, while it is called today; while the prophets and the gospel's silver trumpet invites thee to repentance and grace; that when that of the archangel shall sound, thou mayest have a happy part in the second resurrection, and meet thy Lord in peace.*—Consider the dignity of thy high calling; consider the noble relation thou bearest to him: Thou too art one of the *children* of God: He hath begotten thee anew in baptism, and adopted thee for his child: He hath also *brought thee up*, and educated thee in the bosom of his church: He hath *nourished* thee with the food of his holy word, yea, of his own most precious body and blood; and shall he call in vain?—Wilt thou also *rebel against him?*

*3. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his ma-*

Not only the more sagacious of domestic animals which man employs, are sensi-

<sup>a</sup> Matt. iii. 2.

*ster's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

fible of their dependence upon him, and of the kindnesses they receive ; but even the stupid *ox* and *ass* have sentiments of gratitude and acknowledgement for those, who are their *masters*, and feed them. But man's stupidity exceeds that of the dullest brutes : He has no regard for him that made him, no love or gratitude for the God that redeemed him ! *Israel after the flesh* (i. e. the mere carnal man) is more brutish than the beasts that perish ! And yet this is not through defect of natural sense or reason, but for want of consideration ; *My people doth not consider.*

4. *Ab sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters ! they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy one of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

And whence can proceed so great a degeneracy, so universal a depravation of manners, as to overspread, and even *had* a whole *nation* with sin and iniquity ? Whence, but from a general abuse and corruption in education ? Hereby the wickedness of one age is propagated to another : The ill example

and vices of the parents are not only copied, but improved and outdone, by their children. These also transmit their crimes, with advantage, to the succeeding generation.—Herein we see the fertile and prolific nature of sin. —How has it turned the blessing of “ Increase and multiply” into a curse, by producing more and more bitter fruits in every age ! So that what the prophet observes here, of the luxuriant growth, and, fatal progress of sin, has been the complaint of all ages ; but of none more justly than our own : So that, it may truly be said, the character which the prophet here gives of his own times, falls greatly short of the wickedness of ours. We surely, of all the people upon earth, are the greatest rebels against God, even because we have the very best of Churches,

churches, the most excellent constitution, the clearest light, the most abundant means of grace, and therefore are the most inexcusable.—That there is a gradation of national and public, as well as of particular and private vices, is evident from the words of God himself in our lesson, as well as obvious to every serious observer. But we, of this age, have found out a way to silence this complaint; and when the notorious wickedness of the times is taxed and lamented, the common reply is, “ It was always so: We are no worse than they were in former times: The world was then as bad as now.” It is true the world was always wicked, and therefore all Christians are required to renounce it, when they enter into covenant with God in Baptism. But if it be considered, that the true standard for deciding this question is not to be taken from the degrees of any people’s immorality, but of their impiety.—Vices and immoralities, be they ever so flagrant, are sins more immediately against ourselves and each other, and but indirectly against God, as acts of disobedience, and violations of his law; whereas atheism, and all acts of impiety, are immediately against the majesty of heaven; not only an avowed rebellion against God, and trampling on his laws, but an insolent denial of his very being. This is a degree of wickedness surpassing that of devils, for they believe and tremble<sup>b</sup>; whereas our more hardened infidels are not afraid to glory in their disbelief of his existence.—Many, indeed, amongst us, profess in words to believe a God; but in their works they deny him; others are ashamed to serve him either in public or private; they have banished him from their closets, their tables, and their families; and themselves from his altar, and his house. The laws, also, which should restrain or punish these enormities, are either silenced or defied.—These are the tokens which give the true character to any age or people; and as they abound

<sup>b</sup> James ii. 19.

amongst us at this time more than ever, are too notorious proofs of our present corruption and degeneracy beyond the example of former ages, and more likely to grow worse than to amend.

5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

6. *From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither molliified with ointment.*

7. *Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire: Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers.*

8. *And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.*

Affliction is like some bodily medicines; if it effect no cure, it often kills. Whom correction amends not, it hardens; and aggravates the guilt of sin, where it works no repentance. Observe then the tender mercy of God, deliberating here, whether he shall strike or correct any more, where no hope of repentance appeared; lest the failure of amendment should enhance their crimes, and the contempt of his paternal chastisement inflame the reckoning against the day of wrath.---This, no doubt, is one cause why God bears so long with wicked men, and incorrigible sinners, in this life; even that they may have the less to answer for, and consequently the less to suffer, in the next. O amazing tenderness of divine goodness, even to reprobates!---

When the *head is sick*, that is, faith St. Bernard, "when rulers are corrupt, nothing appears sound in the Church: The whole *body languishes*, from the crown of the *head* to the *sole of the feet*, from the greatest to the meanest: Those, who ought to heal the sores, increase them: Those, whose care it should be to close and bind them up, rend them open, and inflame them."

In the same words also, we see a lively image of a soul immersed in sin. It is covered with *wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores*; yet it feels it not; it seeks no help, no kind hand to close and bind them up; no ointment to mollify, no salve of heavenly grace to cleanse and heal, its mortal wounds.

If we consider the soul as a little empire; in the description of a country desolated by enemies (v. 7, 8.) we see, as in a picture, the soul's miserable estate when enslaved by sin. No sooner doth she revolt from God, her liege lord and sovereign, but a civil war ensues; her *country*, that is, the whole extent of her dominion over the inferior appetites, is ravaged and laid waste by a thousand unruly passions; there is nothing but tumult and confusion, disorder and desolation.—Her *cities*, that is, her superior faculties, the seats of reason and of the affections, the head and the heart, are scorched with the flames of furious and inordinate desires; of lust, envy, avarice, ambition, revenge; they are *burnt with the fire of hell*, horror of conscience, rage, and despair. Again, *strangers*, that is, the infernal spirits, *devour* and destroy all that is good within her; she becomes desolate and destitute of every virtue, like a country reduced to a wilderness by a foreign and barbarous invader.—Thus the soul, who is the true *daughter of Zion*, who had once God for her father, the Church for her mother; whenever she leaves God, is left of God, and his holy angels, to the mercy of unclean, unmerciful spirits; left *like a lodge in a garden*, &c. which is forsaken, when the fruit is gone, to be a harbour for vagabonds, and a receptacle for thieves; or like a *besieged city*, that is given up to plunder and ruin.—O miserable forlorn estate of every soul that lives in a course of wilful sin, and hath forsaken its own mercy!

9. *Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should*

The flock of God is indeed *small*, and always hath been so; yet for their sakes it is, that the many thousands

*have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

fands of wicked people are spared. They are the holy seed<sup>c</sup>, which preserves the church, that true city of refuge, amongst us, and restrains the justice of God from consuming us utterly, as he once did the cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, when the righteous *Lot* was departed, and none good were found therein.

10. *Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*

It may seem strange, that the *rulers* of God's people should be called *rulers of Sodom*, and his people, *the people of Gomorrah*; and this too by God himself. But it is much more strange, that while nothing is more terrible to us than reproach from man, which is not always just, we are so little concerned at the reproach of God, which is ever true.

11. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of be-goats.*

12. *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?*

13. *Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot*

By all this we are taught, that there is no virtue, much less merit, in the external offices and mere ceremonies of religion, except they be offered up by a penitent and obedient heart. What God here rejects, as a trouble and irksome, yea, as *iniquity*, and odious, to him, were things of his own appointment; established and enjoined by his own laws, and not yet repealed. But the corruption of their hearts, and depravity of their morals, had corrupted all their religious performances, and turned their sacrifices into

<sup>c</sup> Ch. vi. v. 13. *The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

*away with ; it is iniquity,  
even the solemn meeting.*

14. *Your new-moons, and  
your appointed feasts, my  
soul hateth : They are a  
trouble unto me, I am weary  
to bear them.*

15. *And when ye spread  
forth your hands, I will hide  
mine eyes from you : Yea,  
when you make many pray-  
ers, I will not hear : Your  
hands are full of blood.*

the purifying of the flesh : In a word, to lead to repen-  
tance, and a holy life. But where it failed of these intend-  
ed effects, and did not answer this end, the strictest ob-  
servances of mere ritual and external acts of religion  
of course proved vain and ineffectual, because they  
attained not the end of the commandment, which is  
charity, or the love of God and our Neighbour.—The  
very light of nature was clear enough to see this truth:  
even a heathen poet<sup>e</sup> has left us a very remarkable  
attestation thereto.

How great reason then had God to expostulate (as  
he does here) with his own people, whose light was  
so much brighter, as well as service purer, than that  
of the gentile world, for so absurd an inconsistence  
between their worship and their practice? And, if in  
his antient people under the law, he could not away  
with a mere form of godliness, without the power  
thereof; how much less will he admit of it in a Chris-  
tian, whose righteousness, and real virtues, ought to  
exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.  
—How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva-  
tion, so much greater light, so much holier a law?—

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vii. 12.

<sup>e</sup> Persius, Sat. 2.

*Compositum ius: fasque anima, fasque recessit  
Mentis, &c.*

sin, and their very *prayers* in-  
to abomination.—The law  
(even of works) was in itself  
holy, and the commandment  
holy, and just, and good<sup>d</sup>: all  
its rites and outward cere-  
monies had a moral and good de-  
sign, and were intended as a  
help and means of grace, a  
purgation and remedy to cure  
as well as to atone for sin; to  
heal the distempers of the  
soul, and cleanse the con-  
science, as well as sanctify to

Works in a Jew without faith, and faith in a Christian without works, is justly hateful to God because hypocritical and unsincere ; it is even a profane mockery of his divine majesty ; and therefore cannot but be *vain*, and *to no purpose*.—In all religions a victim without a heart has been counted a prodigy, and was looked upon as an indication of divine wrath, as well as an evident token of rejection. In a Christian, the heart is the only sacrifice that God will accept : if we bring not this, we bring nothing.

16. *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.*

17. *Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

In these words are contained the sum of our baptismal vow, the very terms of the second covenant, upon which we are to be reconciled to God ; to wit, repentance, faith, and obedience. This triple vow is often inculcated to us, by the church, in the course of her lessons.—Re-

pent, believe, and obey, is the whole tehour of our heavenly charter, and the very plan upon which our excellent church proceeds, in the choice of her instructions throughout the year ; and we may truly say is the main purport and design of the whole Bible.

*Wash ye, make ye clean, cease to do evil.*—What is this, but the first word of the gospel, and first branch of the covenant, “ Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins ? ”

*Learn to do well, seek judgment.*—This *learning* and *seeking* is the work of faith.—To do and perform the duties of religion (such as *relieving the oppressed*, &c.) is the business of obedience ; but faith must teach us how to *do it well*. By faith only can we *learn* the manner, the means, and the end, of true obedience.—It is not enough to *cease to do evil*, that is, to repent ; but we must also perform what is good, yea, perform it *well*.

<sup>8</sup> *Bona, bone.*

Observe

18. *Come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Observe here, that God does not require a blind and implicit faith.—True faith will bear the closest examination, the strictest scrutiny ; for it is itself the highest reason. It is indeed above human reason, but never contrary, much less contradictory, thereto. A blind faith makes a blind obedience. God would have us make use of our reason as far as it will go, not only in the affairs of nature, and our own concerns, but with him also about the great affairs of grace, of heaven, and heavenly things :

For here he invites us to it ; *Come, saith he, and let us reason together.* He dislikes not a freethinker in religion, provided he be an humble penitent, and keep within the bounds of modesty, and the best reason that he hath. *Reason* with God, of his works, his providence, his word, &c. we safely may ; but we may not *dispute* with him : We must not set up our frail and fallible reason, as the standard of divine truth, and the judge of his word and will. The infinite condescension of God, to argue the case, and reason with us, should rather remind us of our infinite distance, and inspire us with humility, and self-abhorrence for our unworthiness, as it did the *pious Job*, c. xlvi. It should give us an awful sense of his supreme wisdom, as well as charm us with the thought of his benignity and goodness. Can man be proud, and see God so humble ? Can he forbear to love whom he sees so gracious ? Would man but embrace this glorious privilege of *reasoning* with his God, he would soon discover his own follies, renounce his errors, and return into the way of truth. The divine wisdom would soon convince him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ; that is, that we are sinners, and that God only is righteous. But alas ! how apt are we to shun all converse and all reasoning with God ; to reject his coun-

sel, and hug a wilful ignorance, as if our misery consisted in having our eyes opened to our danger; and our happiness, in going blindfold to our ruin!—Many, too many, there are in this profane age, who reason freely of God, but how few are they, who care to *reason* with him!—To do this is the office of meditation and prayer; but the former is the language of vain philosophy, incredulity, and pride. From which prevailing vices of the times, good Lord, deliver us!

*19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.*

“ It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”—Man may wash, may cease to do evil,

&c. Man may be *willing* to be saved, and who would not? The desire of happiness is natural to all. But this, without the promise and word of God, assuring us of acceptance, would avail us nothing. “ It is by grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” So speaks St. Paul<sup>i</sup>: On which a pious commentator<sup>k</sup> thus descants; “ It is the will, which believes the word of faith by adhering thereto, and which obeys the inspirations of good by consenting to it. But this belief and adherence, this willingness of obedience, are the proper effects of grace, and a pure gift of God: Grace does all; the will does all likewise; both acting jointly: But grace does all in the will; and the will all by grace.”

*To eat the good of the land.]* This is a temporal promise, and, to a carnal Jew, carries in it no more than a temporal blessing; but as to the Christian, whose views extend beyond this world, and to whom all God’s words are spirit and life, he seeks and sees, in that *good* which he is to eat, the food of his soul, a spiritual banquet: in the land where this *good* grows,

<sup>b</sup> Rom. ix. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Ephes. ii. 8.

<sup>k</sup> Quesnel.  
he

he sees the heavenly *Canaan*, flowing with more delicious dainties than milk and honey : he sees joy, and peace, and life, for evermore : in a word, he sees his Saviour, who alone deserves to be called the *good of our land*. His precious body was taken out of it, and is still reserved to us, under the sacred figure of bread and wine, to be the continual food of our souls.—Thus it was (as the Psalmist speaks) that “righteousness looked down from heaven [to assume this body] ; and thus our land did yield her increase! ”—Thus it is, that heaven and earth, God and man, are united in Christ ! And except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood we have no life in us<sup>m</sup> ;—nothing in us that deserves the name of life, neither the true *good* of this land, nor that of heaven.—Note, the sacrament of the Lord’s supper seems to be intimated to us here, as that of baptism was by *washing*, v. 16.

20. *But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword : for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

*Refusing* implies a previous overture of grace, and of the terms of salvation : and *rebel*ing imports a prior allegiance, and professed subjection to the laws of God.

Whosoever rejects the go-

spel, when sufficiently propounded, and *refuses* to believe it ; or whosoever withdraws his obedience to Christ, after receiving him as his Lord and King, and so *rebels* against him ; is worthy to be *devoured by the sword* of his justice.—Treason is death by all laws, and cannot well escape ; but he that *refuses* mercy and pardon, when offered to him, makes death his choice, and cannot but perish.

21. *How is the faithful city become an harlot ! it was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it ; but now murderers.*

The Church is frequently in the scriptures compared to a city, and to a wife : Here both emblems are united in her character. The *Jewish* church had once been like a

<sup>l</sup> Ps. lxvii. 6.

<sup>m</sup> John vi.

22. *Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixt with water.*

23. *Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.*

well-ordered city, or a faithful and virtuous wife; a eminent for the care and discipline of her people, as she was true and constant in her love to God: Equally renowned for the virtue and piety of the children she had brought up, and for her chastity and fidelity towards him that had espoused her to himself.—

But now, how great and deplorable a change is here, both in them and in her! She become an *harlot*, her people *murderers!*—The reason of so flagrant an apostasy is here assigned; and the same causes will always produce the same effects in every church. 1st, *Her silver becomes dross.*—Silver we know is the common standard of all trade and commerce between men; the coin therefore that is made of it, must not only have an intrinsic and proportionate value to all commodities, but have the image and superscription of him, whose coin it is. In the spiritual sense then, *silver* imports here both the doctrine and example of a church; her doctrines must be the current standard of her practice, and her practice be consonant and equivalent to her principles. What she teaches, ought to bear the stamp and impression of Christ her King, in order to prove it true sterling; her example, and the life of her members, should be the supscription,—to ascertain the value, and privilege, the use and currency. But when it is eaten up with rust,—for want of use; when become reprobate silver (as *Jeremiah* calls it, c. xxx.), and turned to *dross*; not only the image and superscription are then defaced, but the value and use destroyed. So fares it with the doctrines of a church; when libertinism and indifference have laid the practical duties of religion aside, corruption soon seizes the whole, blots out the divine character and impression, and turns all to an useless foul and cancerous *dross*, not only

only good for nothing, but hurtful and pernicious.—2dly, *Thy wine is mixed with water.*] This is assigned as another cause of a general corruption in the Church.—*Wine*, we know, is a comforter, reviving the spirits, and chearing the heart : Such are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit to the soul. But earthly mixtures, all carnal joys, worldly pleasures, and sensual enjoyments, flatten the taste, deprave the relish, of heavenly things ; and by degrees not only render the influence of them vapid and unsavoury, but at length quench the spirit, and utterly extinguish all sentiments of piety and religion.—Now the grand cause, and prime source, of a general and universal depravity in church and state, is, 3dly, The vicious lives, evil practices, and bad examples, of magistrates and governors ; particularly their covetousness and injustice : The first is the cause of the latter ; the latter, the necessary consequence and agent of the former. Men are covetous, because they love the world, and the things of the world, more than God : They have recourse to injustice to support and feed their avarice. But when avarice has tainted the heads of any people, it soon spreads its infection to the whole community ; nothing contributing more to corrupt the morals and virtue of a nation, than the bribery on one hand, and oppression on the other, which evil magistrates employ, who have nothing but their own filthy lucre and self-interest in view.—Thus the love of money is, too truly, the root of all evil : It alienates from God, and then oppresses its neighbour ; lays waste the conscience, where-ever it prevails ; and depraves the manners of a people, where-ever it spreads.

24. *Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty one of Israel, Ab, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.*

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And when this is the state of any church or nation; what can we expect but heavy and fearful judgments ? The very nature of such sins brings their punishment along with them. But, what is  
C more,

more, God hath peremptorily pronounced the sentence, and proclaimed all those *enemies*, and objects of his wrath and vengeance, who are guilty of such crimes. And this sentence of divine justice, however in mercy respited for a time, will inevitably take hold of every such people, and every such soul, as shall continue to commit the like sins. And what can we of this nation say, in arrest of judgment? Do not our public vices equal, nay far surpass, those of the *Jews*? And will not our punishment fall so much the heavier when it comes?—Yea, the more heavy still, the longer it is delayed.

*25, And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.*

But why doth God turn his hand to punish us?—  
*'Tis purely out of love; 'tis merely from a principle of compassion and mercy.*

He punishes all, that all may

not be lost: He chastises all, that some may amend: He afflicts the body, and this outward estate, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. He turns his hand, from bestowing benefits when abused, to wholesome severities, and salutary correction; that so he may purge away the *dross* of our sins, and take away all the *tin* from our silver; refining our ore, and purifying all that is not genuine, sincere, and laudable, in our faith and morals.

*26. And I will restore thy judges, as at the first; and thy counsellors, as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called The city of righteousness, The faithful city.*

Another end of God's judgments is, to separate and pluck away the wicked (who may well be called *dross*, according to Jerem. c. vi. 29) from the good. And this promise was accomplished, in part, to the *Jewish* church, after their re-

turn from the captivity; after they had been purified in the *Babylonish* furnace: But hath been more eminently fulfilled to the Christian church, after the coming

coming and sufferings of Christ. Then was fully effected in him the restoration of man to the original righteousness he had lost by the fall: Then were restored to the church, in the Apostles, and first preachers of the Gospel, her judges, as at the first; and her counsellors, as at the beginning. See chap. lx. 17. But the full and final accomplishment of this promise, will be at the second Advent of Christ, when the heavenly *Jerusalem* shall come down upon earth. Then shall she merit indeed to be called, *The city of righteousness, The faithful city.* See ch. lxv. 17. 2 Pet. iii. 13. and *Revel.* xxi. 1.

27. *Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.*

The redemption of man was atchieved by judgment; that is, by the sufferings and death of Christ, who, by his one oblation of himself once

offered, hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient, sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, but especially for them that believe, the true *Zion*, and church of God. And who could do this, but He?—Who, but He, could satisfy divine justice? Who but that One, whose merits were infinite, and so equal to that justice, and whose person was essentially holy and divine? Thus was the church *redeemed*; this was the price that was paid to purchase her, even the blood of Christ.—But then her converts, those who repent, and believe in him, and are true proselytes to his religion, must be conformed to his image in *righteousness*, and true holiness. To his sufferings and righteousness they must join their own: They also must take up the cross; they must add to their faith, virtue.—This is the sole design of the Gospel; this the great end why Christ gave himself for us, that he might “redeem us from “ all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—Thus, denying

all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, we shall be *converts* indeed, and finally numbered among those saints, who are thus *redeemed with righteousness*, in glory everlasting.

*28. And the destruction  
of the transgressors, and of  
the sinners, shall be together;  
and they that forsake the  
LORD, shall be consumed.*

as well as doctrines, of Christ and his church, and thereby incur the contempt and persecution of the vain and profane; what but inevitable *destruction* will be the end of those who obey not the Gospel of Christ; much more of those, who not only neglect to enter into life themselves, but would hinder them that are entering; to go in? *They that so forsake the LORD, who is life itself, make death their choice: they shall be consumed.*

*29. For they shall be  
ashamed of the oaks which  
ye have desired, and ye shall  
be confounded for the gar-  
dens which ye have chosen.*

" worldy power and interest, I once foolishly esteem'd as strong and lasting as an *oak*; the enjoyments of pleasure, and earthly happiness, I once thought a *garden* of delight, a paradise abounding with every sweet. But now I see, I feel, they are all vanity, and vexation of spirit."--This is the salutary confusion and remorse of a truly penitent soul, when it looks back on all its follies; the vain, trifling, and empty, as well as base and criminal, pleasures of sin; which it once preferred before all the noble, solid, and manly delights of virtue, the glories

But if judgment must begin at the house of God, and the time is now come that it first begin at us, even those, who strive conscientiously to fulfil all righteousness, all the institutions,

Blessed is the shame that worketh repentance! Happy he who is ashamed of sin! Who can say, "What fruit had I then in those things whereof I am now abashed?"

The things of

ries of Heaven, the pure and holy sweets of Grace, the eternal and beatific fruition of God.—What can be more shameful than such a course ! What more confounding than such a choice !

30. *For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.*

It is usual with God to punish every sin in kind, and suit the penalty to the nature of the crime ; that so his rod may both chastise and amend, correct and instruct.

For so it instructs us, not only to read our faults in the very punishment we endure, but to see his mercy, as well as justice, in every stroke he inflicts ;—his mercy and love to the soul, his hatred and severity against sin : God's scourge teacheth both, that so we may learn to love and honour him as a Father, revere him as our Judge, and adore him in both, as a merciful and gracious, a holy and a righteous God. It was the custom, in antient times, to worship their idols under the covert of *oak-trees*. Such are here threatened, that they shall be blasted, both they and their *oaks* ; to the intent they may learn, and be convinced, by their own experience, that all their hopes in such things are, at best, but a shadow, and at last shall decay and fall like a fading *leaf*.—Good men are often compared in Scripture to trees ; but they are such trees, as not only bear fruit, but are ever-greens : “ His leaf, saith the Psalmist<sup>p</sup>, “ shall not wither.”—But the wicked, who live without God in the world, are likened to trees in winter, which have neither fruit nor leaves ; yea, to trees “ withered and dead, even twice dead, and plucked “ up by the roots<sup>q</sup>.” They are also compared (here in our lesson) to a *garden*, in a scorching summer, *which hath no water*.—Divine Grace is the water of life, and the life of the soul. To this it is that we owe the root, the flower, and fruits, of all good

<sup>p</sup> Ps. i.

<sup>q</sup> Jude 12,

works. Without this, the very *leaf*, and appearance of virtue, fadeth away, and nothing grows.

*31. And the strong shall be at ease, and the maker of it as a spark ; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

All attempts of men, which are contrary to the order of God, shall prove their ruin.—Their works are the *tree*, and their sin the *spark* that sets all on fire.

The more of this kind they do, and the more evil actions they commit, what do they, but heap on mere fuel on the fire, which is to consume them, and their works ?

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## *The First Sunday in ADVENT.*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer *Isaiab Ch. ii.*

### P R E F A C E.

**T**HIS Lesson describes, as some think, the twofold Advent of Christ: 1st, His coming in mercy to save, 2dly, His coming in glory to judge, the worl'd. But it seems rather to represent the effects of his first coming, namely, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, the glory of the church, or kingdom of the Messiah; and that it should not only be universal, but far superior to all the kingdoms or empires of the world.—It describes also the spiritual effects of his first coming, which are likewise twofold; either salutary and happy, or penal and destructive: That peace, unity, and concord, shall be to all that receive him in faith; all that flow unto him; i. e. the stream of whose affections moves freely, tho' not naturally; who, by the impulse of a divine and supernatural grace, are elevated above themselves and the world, and carried upwards towards Heaven and heavenly things. But, on the contrary, such as do not believe on him, shall not be able to exalt themselves: Their pride shall be humbled and brought low: “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”—Happy indeed will be this effect of Christ's first coming, if our pride be thereby humbled, and our lofty looks be brought down: Happy, I mean, if it precede, but fruitless, miserable, and vain,

<sup>1</sup> *Rem. ii. 9.*

*if it follow, his second coming ; when the day of grace is past, and judgment is begun.*

Conclude we, therefore, as our *Lesson* rightly warns us, Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; i. e. from trusting in mere man: for wherein is he to be accounted of? But let us hold fast the profession of our faith in Christ, who is not a mere man, having breath in his nostrils only, but hath life in himself; yea, is life itself, and therefore GOD, as well as man.

### The First Sunday in A D V E N T.

#### The Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. ii.

1. **T**HE WORD that Isa-  
iah, the son of Amoz,  
saw, concerning Judah and  
Jerusalem.

**T**HE WORD which Isaiah saw, &c.] To see a word, is an expression which, to natural reason, sounds like a mere solecism, and may seem a great impropriety of speech. But, as our Lord saith, "What is impossible with men, is possible with God." So here, and in many other expressions in Scripture, what is not sense, or intelligible to the common reason of man, is obvious and plain to divine faith.—Reason indeed may apprehend it in a metaphorical and figurative sense: But faith needs no figure to explain it—The Word which appeared to the prophet, the Word which he saw, was the divine *Logos*, the eternal WORD, and SON of God. And that this word was visible, as well as audible, we have the testimony of St. John; for he saith, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the WORD of Life."—The Word then

<sup>1</sup> John i. 1

that

that *Isaiah saw*, was the same ever-blessed Son of God; whom the apostle saw and heard: The same Lord, whom he himself *saw sitting upon a throne*, ch. vi. 1. and whose *voice he heard*, ver. 8. and who here revealed this prophecy to him, *concerning Judah and Jerusalem*.

Some translators<sup>t</sup>, to avoid this seeming impropriety, have given the phrase another turn: But we may often observe, that the closer we keep to the letter of the originals, both of the old and new Testament, the more heavenly and divine, consequently the truer and more expressive, the sense.----“The words, which God speaks to us, are spirit, “and they are life<sup>u</sup>; and therefore, to be “spiritually discerned and understood.”-----Reason alone cannot apprehend the meaning of what is the proper object of faith. Of itself it has neither the faculty nor light, whereby divine things are to be seen. The first it must borrow from faith; the latter from him, who is the Light and the Truth.—Faith is as much above reason, as reason is above sense; or this sensitive life above vegetation. Let not reason therefore presume to intrench upon faith; it loses itself, when it becomes excentric, and moves out of its proper sphere.

*Concerning Judah and Jerusalem.]* Is this a mere amplification, signifying no more than the country and chief city of the *Jews*? Or may we not rather take it in a more distinct and restrictive sense; by *Judah* meaning the body of the *Jewish* nation, especially the wicked and unbelieving *Jews*; and by *Jerusalem* understand the Christian church, the *Jerusalem* which is from above, and the mother of us all? It is evident we are to understand the prophecy, immediately following, of the Christian church, ver, 2, 3. And

<sup>t</sup> *Tremellius* renders it, *Verbum quod visione percepit*: And *Castalio* very flatly, *Effatum quod edidit*. The LXX is somewhat nearer,

<sup>u</sup> *Job.* vi. 63.

<sup>w</sup> *1 Cor.* ii. 14.

as plain, that the severe reproof, ver. 6, &c. relates to the impenitent Jews.

*2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

By the *last days* is generally meant (the *sæculum Christianum*) the æra or age of the *Messiah*, commencing from the publication of the Gospel, until the end of the world.—And the *mountain of the LORD's house* is a prophetical description of the Christian church; yea, the very

word **CHURCH** <sup>x</sup> signifies the *Lord's house*: And *mountains* and *bills* <sup>y</sup> being antiently the places made use of for religious worship, among the *Jews*, as well as *Gentiles*, this prophecy declares, that the Church of Christ (who is here expressly styled *LORD*, or *Jehovah*) should be *exalted* above them all. The Church is also called a *mountain*, in *Dan.* ii. 3. “The stone <sup>“</sup> became a great mountain, which filled the whole <sup>“</sup> earth.”—To this *mountain*, or Church, it is said, by our prophet, that *all nations* (or rather, *all the nations* <sup>z</sup>, or *Gentiles*) *shall flow*. In Scripture-language, multitudes of people are often compared to great waters, the sea, rivers:—But, for waters to flow up *to* hills and mountains, is contrary to the course of nature; they rather flow *from* them. Observe we then, that the conversation of mankind is no work of nature, but of divine and supernatural power, and one of the miracles of Grace.

*3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he*

This whole prophecy is word for word the same in the prophet *Micha*. It was repeated, and put into the mouths of two witnesses, the more strongly to confirm our

<sup>x</sup> Οἶκος κυριακός. Hence our word *Church* and *Kirk* are derived.

<sup>y</sup> Mount *Sion*: Mount *Gerizim*.

<sup>z</sup> Πάντα τὰ ἑβραῖ.

*will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

4. *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

faith in an article of the highest consequence, as well as benefit and comfort, to mankind; namely, the coming of Christ's kingdom, and its glorious, salutary, and pacific effects.—Both our prophets say, *Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem;* to signify to us (as one of the Fathers <sup>a</sup> hath justly observed) that the old Jewish law should be annulled, and a new one published by Jesus Christ. “The

“ first law, faith he, which was delivered by *Moses*,  
 “ went forth from *Horeb*; but the Christian law  
 “ from *Zion*.”—Who this Word of the Lord is, that should go forth from *Jerusalem*, hath been already observed; even the same that the prophet saw, ver. 1. the same which afterwards was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; the same who went forth from *Jerusalem*, first to suffer (without the gates) and then to ascend to his glory, even the Lord JESUS CHRIST.—In his time (the time of his reign) it is said, *They shall beat their swords into plow-shares, &c.* that is, a perfect peace and tranquillity shall ensue, where-ever the Christian religion prevails; and where that law, which went forth out of *Zion*, obtains its full force and effect; so that however improbable the literal accomplishment of this prophecy may seem, yet may we affirm, it hath already come to pass: For certain it is, where-ever this spiritual empire of Christ hath been fully established in the hearts and lives of particular persons, or people, the first and immediate effect of it hath ever been peace, and love, and charity: All

<sup>a</sup> *Lactant.* l. iv. p. 125.

enmity and contention, all wars and animosities, have ceased. The very instruments of strife, *sicil.* the learning of the wise, the policy of the statesman, the ambition of the great, and thirst of dominion, which, like so many *swords* and weapons of *war*, have wounded the peace, and kept up a long and unnatural discord among mankind, have often, by the power and influence of the Gospel, been converted into a contrary use, and been happily employed in promoting the blessings of piety and peace: Like the *plow-share*, turning up the fallow ground; fitting and preparing the soil of the heart, for the reception of the divine seed of the Word:—In which sense it is, that “we are God’s husbandry<sup>b</sup>. ” Nay, *spears* also have been turned into *pruning-books*; that is, sharp words, and harsh revilings, which would like a *spear* at a distance, have been turned into wholesome admonitions, and salutary reproofs, to prune away the dead or luxuriant branches of the spiritual vine; for “we “ are also the Lord’s vineyard<sup>c</sup>. ”

*Of the LORD*, that is, of

5. *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.* Christ; for “He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” “In this light shall we see light;”—Light, to see and eschew the ways of sin; light, to see and walk in the paths of truth.—“He brought life and immortality to light, “ through the Gospel:”—“In him is life, and the life is the light of men.”

6. *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are footsayers like the Philistines; and they please them-*

The crimes here specified, for the cause of which God is said to have *forsaken* the Jews, are plainly reducible to those three species, which all Christians are obliged to renounce in their baptism;

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> See Ch. v. 7. John xv. 2. &c.

namely,

*selves in the children of strangers.*

7. *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures: their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.*

8. *Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.*

our acceptance with God: But a wilful relapse into them again, is a renouncing of him. We forsake, and are *forsaken* of, him: Those who wilfully fall away from Grace (and our Lord<sup>4</sup> confirms the observation) become generally more wicked than they were at first, before they were purged from their old sins. So that the last end of such men must be worse than the first.

9. *And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

Instead of appeasing divine justice, adds a deeper dye to the guilt of those sins, which he labours to expiate by a false devotion. Yea, superstition humbles more than the true religion; not only the *mean man boweth down*, but the *great man* also humbleth himself, before his dumb idol. But how preposterous an humility must it be for man, who is made in the image of God, to bow down to stocks and stones, the work of his own hands! Nay, if he worship the

namely, the sins of the world, the flesh, and the devil.—

*Soothsaying, and idolatry, are the special works of the devil;—silver and gold, horses and chariots,, as plainly denote the pomps and vanities of the world; and, by the children of strangers, we may understand the abominable sin of Sodom, the very filthiest degree of fleshly lust.—The renouncing these, are the indispensable terms of*

Note here the absurdity, as well as fatal effects, of idolatry; it first infatuates, and then destroys. It degrades the man below the

very vilest creatures; and

instead of appeasing divine justice, adds a deeper dye to the guilt of those sins, which he labours to expiate by a false devotion. Yea, superstition humbles

more than the true religion; not only the *mean man boweth down*, but the *great man* also humbleth himself, before his dumb idol. But how preposterous an

humility must it be for man, who is made in the image of God, to bow down to stocks and stones, the work of his own hands! Nay, if he worship the

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xii.

Sun, and host of Heaven, tho' admirable in themselves, they are but creatures, made for the use of man: Yea, moreover, if he worship the saints, they are but his fellow-servants; or even the holy angles, they are but ministering spirits, made to minister to, and attend, him.—Idolatry, of every kind, is an indignity to our own nature, as well as to God.

This is spoken to the true

*10. Enter into the rock, and bide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.*

believer; as if he would say, While the sinners and idolaters are threatened with judgments, God will speak peace to his people, and to

his saints, that they turn not again, and perish with the wicked. To every one of them he will say, *Enter into the rock*, that is to say, believe in Christ; for he is the rock, on which the church of God is founded: Enter into, by an unitive faith, and dwell in, Christ; for in him alone is safety, protection, and defence.—*Hide thee in the dust*; that is, take refuge in his humanity; and therein, as in a glass, see the true nature of humility, as well as the just ground of hope. Take sanctuary in that *rock*, by a true faith, *for fear of the Lord*; i. e. for fear of his justice: *Hide thee in the dust*, by a profound humility, that so thou mayest be saved by his mercy.

*11. The lofty looks of man shall be bumbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*

*12. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and be shall be brought low;*

Where-ever the spirit of Christianity prevails, it shall quite destroy all vanity and pride. The great end and design of the Gospel is to teach men humility; and this effect it will constantly produce, even in the greatest men; tho' *lofty as cedars*, strong and spreading as *oaks*, exalted and firm as *mountains and hills*, &c. where the seed of the Word falls in-

13. *And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan;*

14. *And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up;*

15. *And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall;*

16. *And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*

17. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.*

18. *And the idols he shall utterly abolish.*

to good ground, the honest and sincere heart, there all *haughtiness* shall be *bowed down*; every imagination that exalteth itself against the obedience of Christ, shall be *brought low*; and the *Lord alone*, the Lord Jesus Christ, be *exalted in that day*. Even Christ himself was therefore *exalted*, because he humbled himself, enduring the cross, despising the shame. Neither is there any other way to glory, but this of *humility*, which he himself hath trod in, and wherein he hath gone before us.

Idolatry is the reverse, and direct opposite, to Christianity. To destroy this was the great end of Christ's advent,

or coming into the world.—But except he were **GOD**, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, his religion would be so far from destroying idolatry, that it would only be a more refined and dangerous species of it. The prophet, therefore, after describing the humbling effects it would have upon the hearts of all sincere converts, concludes all (that so he might acquit the worship of Christ from all charges of idolatry) with this positive assertion, that it would prove the most effectual means of putting an end to all false and idolatrous worship: *The idols he shall utterly abolish.*—The like conclusion we meet with in the apostle St. John (1 Ep. v. 21.) where having affirmed, that Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal Life, he immediately subjoins, and closes

closes all with this advice, " Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

19. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

*When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.)* When Christ came to erect his kingdom in the world, great was the opposition it met with, both from Jews and Gentiles; and great and terrible commotions hath it since occasioned, and will

still occasion, all over the world; so that the *earth* shall seem as if *shaken* with an earthquake. This Christ himself foretold<sup>e</sup>, " Think not that I am " come to send peace on earth: I come not to send " peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man " at variance against his father, and the daughter " against the mother, &c."—But, maugre all opposition, his kingdom shall finally prevail, as *Daniel* hath foreshewn. " It shall break in pieces and consume all " those kingdoms (which have opposed it) and it " shall stand for ever."—This passage in our Lesson may likewise be applied to any particular person, when under the sense of God's displeasure, and a deep conviction of sin: God may then be said to *shake terribly the earth*; this earth of ours, this little world; the whole human frame, shall then be shaken by the terrors of the Lord.—And this all know, who have ever felt the stings and lashes of a guilty or wounded conscience; or observed the effects of a troubled mind in others.

20. *In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for*

What we render *idols* of silver, and *idols* of gold, the Hebrew calls, *vanities of his silver, and vanities of his gold.* The original properly

*himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats.*

21. *To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

signifies a nothing<sup>f</sup>, and thence is used in Scripture to signify an *idol*. To this primary sense of the Hebrew word the apostle alludes, where he saith, “ An idol is nothing<sup>g</sup>. ” This prophecy, of the abolition of idolatry, was literally fulfilled, 1st, When the Jews

returned from their *Babylonish* captivity, and relapsed no more into idolatry ; afterwards, in the Gentiles, upon their conversion to Christianity ; and now by all Christians, who, in baptism, renounce, and, in fact, forsake, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world ; of which *gold* and *silver* are the chief jewel and support, the worldling’s *idol*, and the miser’s god :--- Lastly, in all profelytes from the church of *Rome*, when they abjure popery : They then abhor what they before adored.---*Casting them to the moles and bats*, denotes the utmost detestation and abhorrence.---And every true Christian should conceive no less hatred and aversion against all those vanities which the world admires, and which alienate the soul from God.--- Note, this prophecy will universally take place, *in that day*, that last and terrible day, of Christ’s second Advent, when he shall come to judge the world.

22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of?*

This verse is omitted in the Greek version ; and, by others<sup>h</sup>, it is placed in the beginning of the following chapter. But it seems a very apt and most proper con-

clusion to what is said before of the *bumbling the loftiness of man*, and that *the Lord alone shall be exalted*.--- But, altho’ commentators take no notice of it, hath it not an eye to the divinity of Christ, warning us

<sup>f</sup> *Res nihili*, a thing of nought.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4.

<sup>h</sup> *Castalio* and *Tremellius*.

not to look upon him as a mere man? For, as such, how could he possibly save us, or even himself? Were he no more than other men, a mortal man only, *whose breath is in his nostrils*, we might well say, *wherein is he to be accounted of?* That of the Psalmist would be applicable to him, as to others; "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for it cost more to redeem their souls: therefore must he let that alone for ever."<sup>1</sup> But Christ hath redeemed his brethren; therefore he is more than man, even God as well as man; true God, and true man, in one person, never to be divided.---And as this season of Advent calls upon us more particularly to consider his nature, let us hear what a noted author<sup>k</sup> of the primitive church hath written to this purpose, which being so full and pregnant a proof of the two natures of Christ, we ought the rather to attend thereto, because the adversaries to this fundamental doctrine of our holy religion, have taken so much pains to weaken, or rather pervert, the testimony of this father, and have the assurance to press him into their own party.---Thus then he speaks: "Wherefore the most high God, and Parent of all, when he would transfer his religion [from the *Jewish* to the Christian church], he sent a teacher of righteousness from Heaven, that so to his new worshipers he might in [or by] him give a new law; not, as he had done before by man only. Nevertheless he would have him born as a man, that so, in all things, he might be like the supreme Father. For he, who is God the Father the original and first principle of all things, because he hath no parents, is most truly styled by *Trismegistus*, *Ἄπατως καὶ Ἀμίτως* [without father and without mother], as being begotten of none. Therefore also it behoved

<sup>1</sup> *Psalm* xlix.

<sup>k</sup> *Lactantius*, lib. 4.

" the

“ the Son to be twice born, that so he might become  
 “ *Ἄπατως καὶ ἄμπτως* [without father and without  
 “ mother]. For in his first and spiritual birth he was  
 “ without mother, being born of God the Father only,  
 “ without the office of a mother ; but, in his sec-  
 “ ond and carnal generation, he was without father,  
 “ being conceived in a virgin’s womb, without the in-  
 “ tervention of an human father : That so, having a  
 “ middle substance between God and man, he might,  
 “ as it were, by the hand, conduct this frail and infirm  
 “ nature of ours to immortality. He was made both  
 “ the Son of God, thro’ the Spirit, and the son of man,  
 “ thro’ the flesh ; that is to say, he is both God and  
 “ man. The divine power appeared in him by the  
 “ works which he did : The frailty of man appeared  
 “ by the sufferings he underwent.” And again, to shew  
 that the author derived this doctrine from the holy  
 Scriptures, he adds, “ That he was both God and  
 “ man, compounded of two natures, we learn from  
 “ the prophets, in their predictions concerning him.”  
 This citation, tho’ somewhat long, will not, it is hoped,  
 appear improper, or foreign to the design of this holy  
 season, which is appointed to precede the Nativity of  
 our blessed Lord, and to instruct and confirm our faith,  
 in a right and orthodox apprehension of his nature,  
 and the high dignity of his person, who came in the  
 flesh, and took upon him the nature of man, in the  
 womb of the Blessed Virgin ; to the intent he might  
 take away the sin of the world (which is commonly  
 called original or birth sin) and save mankind.  
 “ To whom therefore be glory and dominion, for  
 “ ever and ever. Amen<sup>1</sup>. ”

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 6.

Note, Because Dr. Clark hath had the assurance to produce this passage from *Laetantius*, in favour of his heretical opinion, it seems the more necessary to transcribe the whole from the original, that the learned and impartial reader may judge on which side of the question that antient father hath given his

testimony.—These are his words—‘ Summus igitur Deus ac  
 ‘ Parens omnium, cum religionem suam transferre voluisset ;  
 ‘ doctorem justitiae misit e cœlo ; ut novis cultoribus, novum  
 ‘ legem in eo, vel per eum, daret ; non, sicut ante fecerat, per  
 ‘ hominem. Sed tamen nasci eum voluit tanquam hominem,  
 ‘ ut per omnia summo Patri similis existeret. Ipse enim Pater  
 ‘ Deus, & origo, & principium rerum, quoniam parentibus  
 ‘ caret, ἀπάτως atque ἀμύτως a Trismegisto verissimè nomi-  
 ‘ natur, quod ex nullo sit procreatus. Idcirco etiam Filium  
 ‘ bis nasci oportuit, ut ipse fieret ἀπάτως atque ἀμύτως. In  
 ‘ prima enim nativitate spirituali ἀμύτως fuit, quia sine officio  
 ‘ matris a solo Deo Patre generatus est. In secunda vero car-  
 ‘ nali ἀπάτως fuit, quoniam sine patris officio virginali utero  
 ‘ procreatus ; ut medium inter Deum & hominem substantiam  
 ‘ gerens, nostram hanc fragilem imbecillemque naturam quasi  
 ‘ manu ad immortalitatem posset educere. Factus est et Dei  
 ‘ Filius per Spiritum, et hominis per carnem ; id est, et Deus et  
 ‘ homo. Dei virtus in eo ex operibus quæ fecit apparuit ; fra-  
 ‘ gilitas hominis, ex passione quam pertulit.’—And again.  
 ‘ Et Deum fuisse et hominem ex utroque genere permisum,  
 ‘ prophetis vaticinantibus discimus.’

*The Second Sunday in ADVENT.*

The Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. v.

P R E F A C E.

**U**NDER the parable of a degenerate vineyard are represented the great corruptions which God's own church and people had fallen into; and the particular sins enumerated, whereby they provoked him; such as, covetousness and oppression, luxury and intemperance, pride, impiety, and profaneness. All which have their special woes, or denunciations of judgment, annexed, as the certain consequence of such crimes, when grown epidemical and common, in any particular nation or people; but more especially among God's own people. When any national church is so degenerated in principles and practice, that religion and virtue are become unfashionable, and public vices are suffered to reign without controul; then may she expect to have her candlestick removed, her vineyard to be laid waste, and trodden down. But when the like corruptions have overspread the universal church, so that no true virtue, no sound faith, is to be found upon earth<sup>m</sup>, then will immediately follow the general judgment, and dissolution of all things; then we may expect the Son of man, and great Judge of the world, will appear to put an end to a state of so general a defection from God.

\* See Luke xviii. 8.

*This Lesson seems therefore designed to rouse and awaken us to repentance, by an awful expectation, and certain looking for, of that great and terrible day of the Lord, when he shall come to execute judgement, and to punish or reward every man according to his work.*

### The Second Sunday in ADVENT.

#### Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. v.

i. **N**O W will I sing to my well-beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard: My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill,

**T**HE prophet, here speaking in the person of God the Father, directs this hymn (or parable poetically expressed) to Christ, the well beloved Son of God, concerning his church, which here,

and in many other places of holy writ<sup>n</sup>, is called a vineyard. And it is properly called his [the Son's] vineyard, because purchased with his blood. It is said to be planted on an hill, because of its conspicuity and eminence; and in a very FRUITFUL, hill, because all God's fresh springs (that is, all the means of grace and good works) are in her.--The literal translation of this passage is, *In the horn of the son of oil*: Yet most interpreters render it as our English version hath it--But is there not a deeper and more mystical meaning in these words? *Horn*, we know, is a common metaphor for strength: And who is the son of oil, but he that is "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"; even the same who is spoken of in *Cant. c. i. 3.* "Thy name is ointment poured forth?"--This therefore is a paraphrastical and figurative name of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ,

<sup>n</sup> *Psalm lxxx. 8. Mat. xxi. 33. Cant. viii. 12.*

<sup>o</sup> *Psalm xlvi.*

who, in so many places of Scripture, is called the Anointed of the Lord ; whose very name is MESSIAH and CHRIST, that is, Anointed ; whose almighty power, whereby he redeemed us, is called the *horn* of his Anointed, and the *horn* of our salvation. So that what St. Peter faith of our Lord, that “ God anoint-  
“ ed him with the Holy Ghost, and with power,” is the true comment on these words of the prophet ; and also of that parallel place in *Habakkuk* ; “ He had  
“ horns coming out of his hands, for there was the  
“ hiding of his power.” So that what here, in the sublime and prophetical stile, is called the *vineyard*  
*in the horn*, is but the very same with what the apostle so often saith, “ the church which is IN Christ Je-  
“ sus.”

*2. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

ments and spiritual graces conferred thereby, the word of God, the faith of Christ, &c, are the inward fence.—These fences are usually called the pale of the church : And by these sacred inclosures the holy catholic church is separated and distinguished from the rest of the world.—*He gathered out the stones* ; that is to say, all things that offend, both original sin, and actual transgressions.—*And planted it with the choicest vine* ; and who is that *choice vine*, but Christ himself ? For so he hath said, “ I am the vine, “ and ye are the branches.”—*And built a tower* ;

<sup>p</sup> John xv. 5.

this *tower* is a most proper symbol of faith; which may well be compared to a *tower*, as, by its height, it gives an advantage, even to the eye of reason, of seeing afar off (as the apostle speaks<sup>9</sup>) even the things of Heaven; and as it is an impregnable security and defence against our spiritual enemies.--“The Name “of the Lord (faith the wise man<sup>1</sup>), that is, faith in “his Name, is a strong tower; the righteous runneth “into it, and is safe.” Thus *Abraham* “was strong “in the faith.”--And this tower of faith is the stronger, because built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; for “that rock “is Christ.”--It is also said to be built in the *midst* of the *vineyard*, or church, to signify to us, that it is the centre to which all other duties should tend, or, be influenced by; for that “the just shall live by “his FAITH<sup>2</sup>;”--not by his righteousness, not as he is *just*, but as he is a believer. This divine virtue, like the heart in the *midst* of the body, or as the sun in the firmament, must actuate and inform the whole.--Moreover, this tower of faith may not improperly be said to stand in the *midst* of the vineyard, as it occupies the middle place of our triple vows in baptism, even between repentance and obedience. Here our church has wisely set it, that it may not only give strength to both, but be, as it were, a commodious light-house, to lighten our darkness on every side, and shew us both how to eschew evil, and how to do good.--*And also made a wine-press therein.*] From the design and proper use of the *wine-press* may be gathered the spiritual sense of it in this place. It is an engine, or instrument, for pressing out the juice of the grape, in order to make wine; the making of which liquor was the ultimate end and design of planting the vineyard. Now, what is the end of our Lord’s building his church, and the design of Christianity, but the glory of God, and the

<sup>9</sup> Heb. v. 13.<sup>1</sup> Prog. xviii. 10.<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 20<sup>1</sup> Iepak ii. 4. Heir. x. 38.

salvation of our souls? This appears by the whole tenor of the Gospel, and particularly by that compendium of it, proclaimed by the heavenly host, at the Nativity of Christ, “ Glory to God in the highest, “ and on earth peace ”.—These two great ends of our Christian calling we are to have in constant view: Of these our spiritual *wine-press* must be composed: And between these two, like the upper and nether part of the wine-press, our good works being compressed, will yield so grateful and rich a liquor, as shall rejoice the heart of God and man, that is, will effectually answer both these important ends, the glory of God, and our own eternal happiness.—But, alas! after all that God hath done for us, all the glorious privileges he hath conferred upon us, what wretched returns do we make him?—He expects *grapes*, the best of grapes, from the *choicest vine*; he looks that we, the branches, should bring forth fruit suitable to the noble stock into which we have been engrafted: “ Works meet for repentance, works “ which accompany salvation.” But, alas! instead thereof, our fruit proves of a degenerate kind, contrary to the nature of him, whose unworthy members we are.—He looks that we should bring forth *grapes* and we bring forth *wild grapes*; the fruits of nature, not of grace; yea, of vice and sin, a mere exotic to our true original nature, not of virtue. “ He “ looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for “ righteousness, but behold a cry,” ver. 7.

3. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.*

4. *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

Great was thy goodness, O Lord, in founding a church upon earth! great thy bounty to us-ward, in choosing us out of the world, and planting us therein! wonderful thy mercy, in bearing with our unfruitful-

<sup>a</sup> Luke ii. 14.

*Wherfore, when I looked  
that it would bring forth  
grapes, brought it forth  
wild grapes?*

own consciences; yea, rebellion against thee! But nothing can be more astonishing, than the base ingratitude of man towards so much love, such infinite obligations of grace and favour! Our own judgment must condemn us. And well it were, if it did; for if we judged ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord.

*5. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.*

*6. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*

*7. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

pleased to expostulate with his antient church of the Jews, for their extreme unprofitableness, under all the means of grace, which he had offered them, and the

ness so long! more wonderful thy condescension in submitting [as here] the equity of thy proceedings to the judgment of man, to our

to man, in enmity and rebellion against thee! But nothing can be more astonishing, than the base ingratitude of man towards so much love, such infinite obligations of grace and favour! Our own judgment must condemn us. And well it were, if it did; for if we judged ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord.

It appearing, by the choice of the Gospel for this day, to be the churches design to propose to our meditation the second Advent or coming of Christ, we may take it for granted, that this lesson, as well as that for the evening, is chosen with the same view. And then we Christians may most pertinently apply that sense to this whole parable concerning the vineyard; and paraphrase the conclusion of it after this manner.---Here, by his holy prophet, and afterwards by his Son, Mat. xxi. [for which reason the parable there spoken by our Lord, seems here, in our lesson, ver. 1. by way of anticipation, to be called the song of his beloved) God was

the ungrateful returns they had made to all his favours and mercies. For this he threatens them with final rejection; and hath executed it long since on that people, for their impenitence and unbelief. For the same reason ought we of this church in particular (who follow them in the like sins) to dread the like terrible judgment of being cast off, and *laid waste*, as that antient church was, and as many national Christian churches have since been, for the like offences. And this procedure of divine justice, with respect to communities and bodies of people, is called his coming; see *John xxi. 22, &c.* But at the last and great day of general retribution, all the particular members of his church, who were planted in his vineyard, but brought not forth suitable fruit, even those who brought not forth *good* fruit, but *wild* and sour *grapes*, as well as those who brought forth none, will then have the like sentence executed upon them, of final rejection, and eternal reprobation.

8. *Wo unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.*

9. *In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair without inhabitant.*

10. *Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.*

11. *Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong*

From hence to the 25th verse, sundry vices are enumerated, which, at the bar of Christ, shall exclude from happiness, and consign all that are found guilty of them, to the woes and punishments here denounced; namely, the covetous and unjust; the drunkard and effeminate; all that wilfully neglect, or impiously despise, the knowledge of God; as well the slothful ignorant, as the proudly wise; all that perversely confound the distinctions of moral good, and evil, calling evil good, and good evil, [as many, in these our evil days,

*drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them.*

12. *And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.*

13. *Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.*

14. *Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.*

15. *And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.*

16. *But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment; and God that is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness.*

17. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.*

18. *Wo unto them that draw iniquity with cords of*

days, professedly do] al that reject the glorious light of the gospel, tho' so brightly shining amongst us, and run into the too fashionable ways and works of darkness, preferring vice to virtue, the bitter fruits and wages of sin, to the sweets of divine grace, and heavenly truths: For these hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth in such iniquity, shall descend into it, &c. Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy one of Israel; that is; because they have rejected the holy Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New, both the Law and the Gospel, and despised the most holy religion of Christ. But while wicked men and oppressors are thus consigned over to the vengeance of incensed and inexorable justice, the lambs of God, i. e. the good, the meek, the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, shall feed after their manner: As they ever were the peculiar care of the great shepherd of souls, they shall be received into his everlasting fold, where

*vanity, and sin as it were  
with a cart rope!*

and glory, where the beasts of prey, the oppressive devourers of God's flock, shall have no admittance—to annoy, or disturb, their repose, for evermore.

19. *That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.*

ly, and often, for damnation on their souls, than the penitent does for pardon and mercy: Nor will they fear or believe the judgments of God, till they feel them.

20. Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter !

21. *Wo unto them that,  
are wise in their own eyes  
and prudent in their own  
sight!*

22. *Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink!*

23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

where they shall securely feed  
beside the waters of comfort,  
in those celestial fields of bliss.

beasts of prey, the oppressive  
shall have no admittance—  
or repose, for evermore.

Habitual sin naturally leads to reprobation. When the conscience is fear'd, it grows not only hard and callous, but bold and desperate; sets God at defiance, and dares him to strike.— Profligate wretches can call as loudly, if not more loud-

How can they but be miserable; how can they escape the *woe* denounced, who mistake the way to happiness; yea, wilfully and obstinately choose the contrary path, which leadeth to destruction?

From the 8th to the 24th verse, we have heard and read what the general sins are, which God's law forbids and condemns; together with the penalty denounced against those, who shall be found guilty of them, or any of them; even a *woe* and a curse. Then follows the execution of that dreadful sentence; and that too

*24. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

*25. Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets: For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

judgment awaken us to hear his voice, while it is called to day, lest, provoked by the hardness and impenitence of our hearts he swear in his wrath, we shall not enter into his rest.

*26. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth, and behold, they shall come with speed swiftly.*

*27. None shall be weary nor stumble amongst them: none shall slumber nor sleep: neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the*

too without the least call to repentance, or any further tender of mercy. But if the consideration of the certainty and severity of divine vengeance at the last day, and these terrors of the Lord now set before us, constrain us to a timely and sincere repentance, none of these woes shall then take hold upon us. Fly we then from sin, more than from the face of a serpent; from those sins especially, to which these dreadful woes are here annexed; and still more particularly, from the most damnable of all sins, obduracy and impenitence. Let these woes be ever ringing in our ears; these tremendous denunciations of

If we understand this prophecy in its literal sense, of armies assembling together to invade, to conquer, or to destroy, we may learn from hence, that the great and terrible inundations of foreign enemies, which, at any time, make invasions upon any country or people, come not but by the special appointment of divine justice.

It

*latchet of their shoes be broken.*

28. *Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind.*

29. *Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.*

30. *And in that day they shall roar against them, like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.*

It is God who musters them together, who arms them, who gives the signal to march, and directs the whole expedition. Thus the *Ammonites, Moabites &c.* were often commissioned to invade and spoil the land of *Israel*. This prophecy was also twice verified on the *Jews*, in a most extraordinary maner, first, by the *Affyrians*, who carried them captive to *Babylon*, and destroyed their country; next, by the *Romans*, who likewise destroyed their city and temple; and of whose army it is noted, that it consisted of divers and very remote nations, even from the end of the earth, a battalion of *Britains*, who were then the remotest of all the known world, serving in the siege against *Jerusalem*.--But the chief design of the Holy Ghost and the Church, in this description of the terrors and miseries of a foreign invasion, is not only as an ensample, but rather as a lively emblem to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, of that great and terrible day of the Lord, when those bitter enemies of mankind, and especially of the church, the whole army of devils, shall be let loose, and have full power and commission to wreak their utmost malice on the enemies of God. These infernal fiends are often compared to *lions*, to roaring lions, seeking whom they *MAY* devour; nothing with-holds them at present, but the mercy and forbearance of divine goodness. When that restraint is taken off, how *swiftly* will they come to destroy the world of the ungodly! How will they *roar like lions!* With what speed and fury

fury will they *lay hold of the prey, carry it away*, and *there shall be none to deliver!*—Now this, we are told, shall happen when the *ensign is lifted up*; that is, when the sign of the Son of man (i. e. the cross<sup>x</sup>) is seen in the clouds of heaven, proclaiming to all the world, that the end of it is come. This will be the signal to that infernal crew, the most dreadful of all God's armies, to begin their invasion. Then, if the wretched sinner *look to the land*, the seat and object of his former happiness and hopes; *behold darkness*, without shelter; *sorrow*, without relief. If, by a late and mis-timed repentance, he cast up his eyes to *Heaven* for mercy, behold there also the very *light* itself will be *darkened*: Not only the sun, the moon, the stars, refusing then to give their light; but the light of God's countenance shall shine no more. Instead thereof, nothing but outer darkness shall forever surround him; nothing but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul that hath done evil, and dies in sin. *The light will be darkened in the heavens thereof.*

<sup>x</sup> So Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catech. Oxf. Ed. p. 216. Αλλα  
ποιος τῆς παροίας αὐτῷ, &c.—“ What is the sign of his com-  
“ ing?—For it is said, *Then shall appear the sign of the son of*  
“ *man in heaven?* The true and proper sign of Christ is the cross.  
“ Σημεῖον δὲ ἀληθὸς ἴδικὸν τῷ Χριστῷ ὁ σταυρός, &c.” And this was  
the general opinion of the fathers; particularly of St. Chrysostom,  
and Theophylact, in their note on this passage of St. Matthew.

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The Second Sunday in A D V E N T.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

I S A I A H, Ch. xxiv.

P R E F A C E,

**T**HIS day (as hath been observed) being appointed by our church for meditating on the second Advent of Christ, or his coming to judgment, we may justly conclude, by the choice she hath made of this chapter for one of her proper lessons on this occasion, that, whatever other senses some expositors may fix upon this prophecy, she takes it, in the sense of St. Jerom and St. Ambrose, to be a prediction of the day of judgment, and end of the world.—Not that it relates only to the final dissolution of all things, but rather, with a vast and extensive comprehension, takes in many very distant views; no one prior period of time setting a bound to the prospect. So that we may not presume, as some do, to limit this prophecy to any one particular accomplishment, such as the destruction of the Jews, Idumeans, &c. but we ought to extend it to every age, and all the various intermediate successions of time, as well as to every nation, from the time of its first delivery, until the very end of the world. As therefore we may very rightly understand it of the first destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, which happened about two hundred years after this prophecy was penned; and likewise of the second and last demolition of that city and temple by the Romans; so all that have lived since those two accomplishments, may as

truly apply it to all and every such cities or people, as are guilty of the like sins. But still chiefly and ultimately it points to the last great and terrible day; “When the Lord himself shall come with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon ALL; when the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; when the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the element shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works thereof, shall be burnt up.”

And here, in honour of the blessed word of God, which our holy church, with as great wisdom as piety (because the second coming of our Lord, which we are this day to contemplate, is grounded solely on the authority of the Scriptures) calls upon us to praise God for, even for causing them to be written for our learning; let us ever have a care of confining the interpretation thereof to any one single sense; but rather consider them as a most fertile field, that produces a greater variety than is possible for man to comprehend. But especially the prophetical parts (under which are also included all typical representations, as a branch and species of prophecy) are so directed by the all-foreseeing eye of God, as to take in, within the compass of their full and final completion, all the special cases and events, that can fall under its proper aspect, unto the end of the world. So that, in this respect also, “No prophecy is of any private interpretation<sup>z</sup>; but extends to the utmost limits of time, and concerns all mankind, in every age, even until the consummation of all things. Whatever prophecy therefore is called the burden of Moab, of Babylon, Jerusalem, &c. was not designed to terminate there, but to reach to every people and country, that should ever after be guilty of the like crimes; a similitude of manners deriving upon all such sinners a similitude of punishment. Some phials of the same divine wrath are reserved for all, that come up to the same pitch of wickedness, till the whole be emptied out, in full measure, on the whole world of the

<sup>y</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 10.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Pet. i. 20.

ungodly,

ungodly, at the last great day of final retribution; when all the various scenes of particular judgments shall be fully accomplished, and shut up, in that general and grand catastrophe, to which they all along had their chief and ultimate regard.—Thus all such divine predictions may be considered by us after the same manner as his providence is represented in that wonderful vision of “one wheel within another.” Ezek. i. Which, as is there observed, never returned, that is, went not back to things past, but proceeded on still in their course, taking in all that stood in their way, and never rested, till they arrived at the throne, or judgment-seat, of Christ. “When they stood still, they let down their wings.—And above the firmament that was over their heads (their business relating only to this state of sublunary things) was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man upon it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord,” ver. 26.

To confirm this observation, I shall conclude with a passage out of Mr. Lowth’s preface to his commentary on the prophet Isaiah.

“ There is, saith he, a treasure of heavenly wisdom contained in the prophets, that can never be exhausted: And as it is highly reasonable to believe, that some parts of the Old Testament prophecies reach to the end of the world; so it is reasonable to expect, that, in every age, Providence should open some new scene, which will give further insight into the meaning of those sacred writings.”

And again:

“ To extend the prophetic views to the end of the world, seems much more agreeable to that description of God’s presence, which the holy writers give us, that he declares the end from the beginning, Isa. xlvi. 10. And that his wisdom reacheth from one end (of the world) to the other mightily, and

" sweetly doth it order all things<sup>a</sup>. So that when  
 " the great mystery of God's dispensation shall be finished,  
 " it will appear, that nothing is contained in them, but  
 " what God hath formerly declared to his servants the  
 " Prophets; as is expressly affirmed, Revel. x. 7."

## The Second Sunday in A D V E N T.

## The Proper Lesson for evening Prayer.

## I S A I A H, Chap. xxiv.

1. **B**ehold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away, the world languisheth, and fadeth

**I**N the foregoing chapters the prophet hath been denouncing judgments against many particular nations, as Babylon, Trye, &c, he comes now to foretel the judgments which were to fall on the Jewish state.—But altho' this might be the first and more immediate event intended in this prediction, its ultimate and principal view most plainly points to the last and general judgment; of which all particular judgments (as was before observed in the preface) are but emblems and forerunners.—And if the corruptions among God's own people the Jews were so great, as to provoke him to cast them out of their land, and to make it empty and

<sup>a</sup> Wisdom viii 1.

waste

*away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.*

5. *The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof : because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.*

6. *Therefore both the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate : therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.*

7. *The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh.*

8. *The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.*

9. *They shall not drink wine with a song, strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.*

10. *The city of confusion is brokea down : every house is shut up, that no man may come in.*

11. *There is a crying for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.*

12. *In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.*

waste ; and if the degeneracy among Christians will, in the latter days, be so extreme, that faith itself will scarcely be found upon earth, even among Christians, how great must the wickedness of others be, who are aliens from the church ! consequently, how universal will the corruption then be ! how incurable the plague and disease of sin ; when faith, the only remedy, the only means for applying a cure, is banished out of the world !—It will be time for thee then, O Lord, to lay to thine hand, when they have destroyed thy law, *changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant :* — High time to make the earth empty and waste, to turn it upside down, and scatter abroad the inhabitants thereof ; for then will be come to pass that desperate state, which St. Paul pronounces “impossible to “ be renewed again unto re-“ pentance <sup>b</sup>. ” And therefore, like the age before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence ; or like the case of *Sodom and Gomor- rab*, when there were not ten good men to be found ; the

<sup>b</sup> *Heb.* vi.

whole world will most justly be adjudged to that doom, to which it is reserved ; and nothing will remain, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.—'Tis for the sake of the church, that the world is hitherto upheld, and so long preserved; that even the ungodly are indulged its comforts, and allowed to enjoy its prosperity and pleasures. But when that only stay is fallen to the ground, and the church itself is become as profligate as the world, without faith and without virtue ; when it shall be, *as with the people, so with the priest ; as with the servant, so with the master, &c.* no piety, no discipline, no justice ; it cannot be, but that God will at once put an end to so general a corruption, by as general a punishment ; so that *the land*, even the whole earth, shall be *utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled.*—Consider this, all ye of the church, who hold the truths of God in unrighteousness : Consider it, ye men of the world, who hate and persecute the church : What are ye doing, but hastening destruction on your own and each other's heads? Judgment advances, as iniquity prevails : Vengeance pursues, as faith retires. The fire of divine wrath shall set the whole world in flames, when that of charity is extinct, and the love of many is waxed cold.—Then will be executed, in full measure, the sentence pronounced in one of our last Sunday's lessons ; “ The destruction of the transgressors, and of “ the sinners, shall be together ; and they that for-“ sake the Lord shall be consumed.” Isa. i. 28.

13. *When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning-grapes, when the vintage is done.*

their prince ; so will it be at the end of the world.

When

*In the midst of the land.]* This may denote to us the universality of the last judgment. For as when an enemy hath penetrated into the heart of a country, it may be called a total conquest, although a small number hold out, and continue faithful to

When *in the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction*; that is, when the church is quite forsaken, and its *gate*, that is, all the avenues and means of grace, are destroyed; yet even then a few will be found, that retain their integrity, and hold fast the profession of their faith unto the end. Of this a *Noah* in the old world, a *Lot* in *Sodom*, an handful of Christians in *Jerusalem*, before its destruction, were types of the small remnant that will then be left: Small indeed, out of such vast multitudes; yet too many to be lost. *Noah* found safety in his ark; *Lot* in his *Zoar*; and the Christians, who fled out of *Jerusalem*, at *Pella*. A small number will be left out of all mankind, yet enough to condemn the world of the ungodly; and to prove, that the duties of religion are not only practicable, but the sure and only way to happiness and safety; yea, practicable in the worst of times, and in the midst of the greatest corruptions. These, like the gleanings of the *olive-tree* and *vine*, escape the eye and hand of the gatherer; but, retaining the genuine goodness of their stock, and being fully ripe, will shew to all, the nature and excellence of the tree, whereon they grew.—And who that observes the perilous times we live in, but must think the day here foretold by the prophets is at hand, even at the door?

14. *They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea.*

15. *Wherfore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the Name of the LORD God of Israel, in the isles of the sea.*

In the Gospel for this day<sup>c</sup>, our Lord, who is to be himself the judge, sets before us the fearful prodigies, the amazing sights, which are to be the dreadful apparatus, the fore-runners and tokens, of the last day; and then adds, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and

<sup>c</sup> Luke xxi.

"lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."—This he faith to the faithful few, that will then be left in the world.—And that these will then do so, is the sense and meaning of what the prophet here foretels.—While the ungodly are under all the terror and consternation possible, their hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth, then will be the time for the righteous to *lift up their voice and sing*.—They shall sing for the majesty of the Lord; i. e. Not only rejoice that their redemption draweth nigh, and that their warfare is accomplished, their persecutions and sufferings, and above all, the horrible impieties of a wicked world, are at an end; but that their dear Redeemer will then be *glorified* before the whole world; that he will then do himself honour on all hardened infidels, all profane scoffers, the enemies and despisers of his sacred cross. They will then *lift up their voice*, when they see him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and *sing for the majesty of their Lord*, their now triumphant Lord and Saviour.—How proper then is the advice of the prophet, which immediately follows, *Glorify ye the Lord in the fires!* Ye, even all ye, that believe in Christ, and suffer for his Name, give him glory even now, in all your firey trials and sufferings, which ye endure for his sake, even for the Name of the LORD God of Israel, which is verily and indeed the Name of CHRIST.

16. *From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the Righteous<sup>d</sup>:* but I said,

The prophet seems here to personate Jerusalem, or the Jewish church, acknowledging the conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity; and her

<sup>d</sup> *Even glory to the Righteous.]* That is to be understood of Christ the son of God, may appear from sundry passages in Scripture, where [the Righteous] is used as one of his distinguishing titles. So chap. llii. 11. of this our prophet, God the Father

*My leanness, my leanness !  
wo unto me ! the treacherous  
dealers have dealt treache-  
rously, yea, the treacherous  
dealers have dealt very trea-  
cherously.*

her people, in their several dispersions, hearing indeed hymns sung to Christ (particularly the Christian doxology of, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c. which seems plainly alluded

to here), but not joining therein. The prophet, foreseeing this, and still personating the Jewish people, cries out, *My leanness, my leanness !* to intimate to us, that it was the spirit of envy (whose noted character is *leanness*), which withheld them from joining with the Christian church, in those hymns of praise to Jesus Christ.—Foreseeing likewise the perverseness of the Pharisees, and Jewish rulers, in rejecting their *Messiah*, that true bread from Heaven, the want of which must needs send *leanness* into their souls ; and that this rejection would happen rather thro' the malice and treachery of their hearts, than any just cause of exception against

ther stiles him, *my righteous servant*. Ch. xliv. 2. he is styled *Teburum*, which, by interpretation, signifies *Righteous*: And in the New Testament he is expressly called *Jesus Christ the Righteous*\* St. Peter † also calls him, *the Holy one and the Just*, or *Righteous* [τὸν δίκαιον]. And this doxology to Christ, as one of the sacred persons in the Blessed Trinity, is called a *new song*, because peculiar to the Christian church, and had never been used in the Jewish liturgy. Hence we have it, ch. xlji. 10 of *Isaiah*, “ Sing unto the “ Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth” Which is parallel to this passage in our lesson. This seems also the Psalmist’s meaning, in his frequent mention of the *new song*; especially, where he calls to the whole world to sing it : “ O sing unto “ the Lord a new song ; sing unto the Lord all the whole earth †.” The Christian doxology of “ Glory be to the Father, and to the “ Son, &c.” was a new song to the Jew, but much more to the Gentiles: Before the coming of Christ, the Jew gave glory to God the Father, but not to God the Son: But the Gentiles to their idols only, and not to the Father nor the Son. But where-ever Christianity hath prevailed, since the coming of Christ in the flesh, there glory to the Blessed Trinity hath ever been the hymn of the Christian church, throughout the world.

\* 1 *John* ii. 1, & 24.

† *Acts* iii. 14.

+ *Psalms* xcvi.

against Christ, and his Gospel ; he further adds, *The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously.*—Yea, he repeats it, with a view, nor improbably, to our Gospel times, and to the treachery of too many Christians, both people and rulers, against Christ, and his religion ; who not only contract a spiritual *leanness*, by neglecting the heavenly food of their souls, tho' plentifully dispensed ; but *treacherously* desert the cause of Christ, either thro' indolence and remissness in their duty, or as downright betrayers of their trust.—Thus the prediction extends both to Jew and Gentile ; and we have lived, alas ! to see the unhappy completion with respect to both. But then, as the prophet intimates, our sin receives a much higher aggravation. For if, as some observe, the first rejection was typified in *Peter's* denial of his master ; and the other, in *Judas's* betraying of him ; we then see the reason of the prophet's exaggeration : The *Jew*, who is represented by *Peter*, *dealt* indeed *treacherously* ; but the apostate Christian, following the example of *Judas*, *deals* **VERY** *treacherously*, by our dearest Redeemer.—But *Peter* repented, and was received to mercy ; and therefore we hope for the conversion of the *Jews* : But what will be the end of those *Judas's* in the Christian church, who not only deny, but betray, the Lord that bought them ?

17. *Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.* This is the end, the deserved end, of all such traitors ; *fear, and the pit, and the snare.* First, *fear*, and the terrors of divine vengeance, shall seize them :—And who is there to save such men as forsake their own mercy ? But if (*2dly*) an hard and impenitent heart gets the better of this *fear*, and terrors of conscience, then shall they fall into the *pit* ; i. e. into a sink of error, and unclean living. If (*3dly*) they pretend to escape this, by a specious appearance of morality, or a counterfeit sanctity ; or think, as some do, by dint of reason, and their

their boasted religion of nature, to be delivered from the *pit*,---of a scandalous life ; the inevitable *snare* of final perdition, the chains of darkness, shall seize upon them for ever.---Such persons are properly and emphatically styled, *Inhabitants of the EARTH*, because their paradise, their heaven, is altogether upon *earth*: their affections are set upon things below, not upon things above. Their conversation, or rather commonwealth, as the oposite's word more truly imports<sup>e</sup>), is not in Heaven; their life is not hid with Christ in God; but is carnal, earthly, sensual, having not the Spirit :---They are therefore without God, because they are without Christ, in the world.

18. *And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit, shall be taken into the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.*

The first part of this verse is an amplification of the foregoing, and hath been already commented upon. But from the words [*the windows from on high, &c.*] we may observe a plain allusion to the description of the deluge, Gen. vii. 11. The prophet describes the destruction of the present world, at the last day, by expressions taken from the narrative of the destruction of the old world, where it is said, “All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows (or flood-gates) of heaven were opened.” But there will be this signal difference with respect to the instrumental cause of both worlds destruction. The windows of heaven were opened to pour down an inundation of waters to drown the old world; a deluge of fire will be rained down from the same heavens, to destroy the earth that now is. So that this second deluge will be like that which the Lord rained down from the Lord upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. So St. Peter informs us,---

<sup>e</sup> Πολιτευμα. *Phil.* iii. 20.

“ As

" As the world, which then was, perished by the water, so the heavens and the earth, which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Pet. iii. 3, 7.

19. *The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.*

20. *The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and shall not rise again<sup>f</sup>.*

We have here a further allusion to the deluge which destroyed the old world, but with this further difference, that, whereas the earth was then not only overflowed with water, but its arch sinking into the abyss, the fountains of the great deep were broken up; yet the earth rose again, and was restored, most probably,

<sup>f</sup> Dr. Scot is of opinion, that the matter of the earth will not be utterly destroyed, or so dissolved, as to be annihilated by the general conflagration, but be turned into a burning mass, and universal *Tophet*, to which the wicked shall for ever be confined; and he finds his opinion on that saying of St. Peter, that it is " kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Pet. iii. 7. Others, as Dr. Knight, &c. are of opinion, that the earth, at the last day, will be restored to that primitive state of glory, in which it was first created, and become a paradise of rest and bliss for the habitation of the just; and that on this earth so renewed will be the millennium, where Christ shall reign a thousand years with his saints. This seems, from a great many passages in Scripture, to be the most probable, as well as most pleasing, opinion. Amongst divers that might be produced, see *Zephaniah* iii. from the 8th verse to the end. And even St. Peter saith, " We look for new heavens, and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness." 2 Ep. ch. iii. 13. And St. John, in his *Revelations*, is very plain and express, that Christ shall reign a thousand years upon earth. The first fathers of the church understood this in the literal sense. But some, in that early age, entertaining gross and carnal notions of that state, they came to be called *Chiliasts* or *Millenaries*, and were reputed heretics. Those who opposed them, instead of refuting the abuse, denied the thing, and turned the literal to a mere allegorical sense: But this was wresting the doctrine to a contrary extreme, as too often happens

bly, to its antient form. But we are here told, that, at the last day, it will be *utterly broken down*, and *clean dissolved*; yea, that *it shall fall, and not rise again*; that it shall be *moved exceedingly* (probably by dreadful earthquakes); that it shall *reel to and fro like a drunkard*, and then be *removed like a cottage*, that falls, or is so taken down, that no part is left standing. If this be so, how unwise must it be to set our hopes or affections on any thing here below, when this very earth we now so much delight in, shall at last be utterly dissolved, and for ever done away! So fleeting, so perishing, are the very foundations and firmest supports of the worldly man's happiness, and best enjoyments. Or rather let us place our affections and desires on that place which had foundations, that shall not be shaken; and on that rock of ages, which shall never be moved.—*Note*, It seems from hence, that if there are to be new heavens, and new earth (according to the sense of the letter), they will not be raised out of the materials or ruins of the old, but be entirely new.

21. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.*

22. *And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in prison,*

This is one of the hard and obscure parts of scripture-prophecy. If literally to be taken, we may well say, it is not yet come to pass.—But if the description which some have given of the state of things at the end of the world be true, and we admit that pleasing hypothesis we meet with in holy writ,

happens to be the case, in some other disputed points, too long to be mentioned here.—On the whole then, may we not safely understand the prophet in the conclusion of our Lesson, as foretelling this glorious reign of Christ, and his saints, in the millenary state—*When the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and before his saints, gloriously?*

*and after many days shall they be visited.*

23. *Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his antients, gloriously.*

writ, and many approved autho-  
riss, concerning the blessed  
millennium, or Christ's reign-  
ing for a thousand years upon  
earth, this prophecy will be  
less difficult to understand.—  
But, be this as it will, and  
according as God shall please  
to dispose the heart of any  
Christian to believe, it is

certain the following exhortation, wherewith one of the primitive writers<sup>g</sup> concludes his description of the millennium, and end of the world, is, at this time especially, a most seasonable and pertinent application, which concerns us all.—“ Seeing these things are “ all true and certain, being foretold by the con-“ sentient voice of all the prophets, it is not to be “ doubted, but that all our hopes of life and salva-“ tion depend solely on the true worship of God, “ and a right faith in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, whom “ God hath sent, and will send, for our deliverance. “ Who so believes not Christ to be God supreme, and “ keeps not his commands and his law, he shall fall “ into those extreme punishments, whereof we have “ spoken.—Despise we then all frail and transient “ things, that we may obtain things truly solid and “ lasting: Reject we these earthly goods, to gain a “ more exceeding weight of heavenly glory: Re-“ nounce we all temporal enjoyments, that we may “ acquire those which are eternal. Let every one of “ us learn righteousness; discipline himself to tem-“ perance of body and mind; prepare for the fight; “ excercise himself to virtue; that whensoever the ad-“ versary [meaning *Antichrist*] shall denounce war, “ we may by no force, no terror, no torment, be “ driven away from what is right and good; that “ no man degrade the dignity of his nature in serving

<sup>g</sup> *Lactantius.*

“ the

“ the work of his own hands ; but with a right  
“ faith, acknowlege the true and only God ; that  
“ throwing off all base pleasures, which press down  
“ the soul, keeping innocency, doing all the good  
“ he can, and laying up for himself, by good works,  
“ treasures in heaven, which neither rust nor moth  
“ can corrupt, when God cometh to judge the world,  
“ he may receive, according to the degree of his vir-  
“ tue, either the crown <sup>h</sup> of faith <sup>h</sup>, or reward of im-  
“ mortality.”

<sup>h</sup> By the *crown of faith*, the fathers meant that of martyrdom : See St. Cyprian de zelo, p. 227. and in many other places.

The

## The Third Sunday in ADVENT.

Proper Lesson for { Morn. Pr. *Isaiah*, Ch. xxv.  
Even. Pr. ————— xxvi.

P R E F A C E.

**B**OTH these Lessons seem chiefly designed to exercise our meditations on the same subject, on which they were employed last week, namely, the second Advent of Christ, or his coming to judgment; but with an observable difference.—Both the proper Lessons for Sunday last, and likewise the Gospel, set before us the judgment-day in all its terrors; and were therefore principally intended to awaken our fears: To-day our hopes and desires are entertained with the glorious prospect of the great blessings and advantages of Christ's second coming, and exhibiting a scene of infinite joy and triumph, to all that love his appearing.

If the first Lesson for this morning, the church is invited as singing an hymn to the MESSIAH, wherein she celebrates both his justice, and his mercy: His justice and power, in punishing his enemies; his mercy and goodness, in saving his people, and giving them an absolute and complete victory over every adversary; over sin and error, sorrow and death. His appearance therefore at the last day she mentions, not as terrible, but as happy and joyful, expected and desired. Lo! this is our God! we have waited for him, &c. See ver. 9.

At his first coming in the flesh, this prophecy was indeed fulfilled according to the letter: He then became visible to the eye; witness old Simeon's testimony, “Mine eyes

“ eyes have seen thy salvation<sup>1</sup>? ” And that of the Baptist, “ Behold the Lamb of God<sup>k</sup>. ”—But it is no less true, that when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, “ every eye shall then see him<sup>1</sup>; yea, all shall then see, and confess him to be GOD. Those, who in life believed not, shall see him, to their conviction and eternal confusion: Those, who now believe, obey and love him; or, with the pious Job<sup>m</sup>, console their sufferings with the assurance of an everlasting redemption from all their troubles; will then, with confidence, say to each other, yea, to those who afflicted them, and made no account of their labours.—Lo! this is our GOD! We have waited “ for him, and he will save us. This is the LORD! “ We have waited for him; we will be glad and re-“ joice in his salvation.”

Note, *The Rev. Mr. Lowth, in his commentary on Isaiah, seems to approve of the above interpretation, by his prefixing the following argument to the two chapters now before us.*

“ Some parts of the last chapter having a relation to “ the end of the world, we may, without breaking in “ upon the connexion of the prophecy, suppose the tri-“ umphant hymns in this, and the next chapter, princi-“ pally to regard the same time, and to be of the same “ nature with those recorded in Revel. xi. 17. xv. 3. “ xix. 6.”—Thus he: But had he adverted to the choice our excellent church has made of these two chapters, for her Proper Lessons on this Sunday in Advent, he might, in deference to her judgment, and I am persuaded would, had he attended thereto, have more than barely supposed, that these two chapters had a principal regard to the second coming of Christ, and the end of the world. Her choice of them, at this season, is, and should be, to all of her communion, the best comment. I often observe, and here take leave to attest, that I find the very appointments, which the church hath made of her Proper Les-

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 30. <sup>k</sup> John i. 29. <sup>l</sup> Rev. i. 7. <sup>m</sup> Ch. xix. 25, &c.

sions for the Sundays and great festivals, do give the best and clearest light to those parts of Scripture, which she has so chosen for our instruction and meditation, throughout the year. And for want of a more careful attention to this her wise choice, most of our commentators, whom I have yet seen, are very defective in their expositions, and often depart from her sense; as might be made appear, in many instances.

### The Third Sunday in ADVENT.

#### Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xxv.

#### A R G U M E N T.

#### An HYMN to CHRIST.

*The Church praiseth him as GOD, for his judgments; not only of vengeance against her enemies, but for his mercy to his people. Wherein she particularly celebrates his two Advents, the first to save and redeem, the second to judge, the world.*

1. O LORD, thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praise thy Name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

In this Psalm, I say, the church, which is there called the queen, and the king's daughter, is taught not only to believe in Christ, but to worship him; for so the Spirit expressly saith to her, "He is the Lord God, " and worship thou him." In pursuance of this divine command, we here find the church, in this her hymn to Christ, confessing and adoring him, as her Lord,

I N Psalm the forty-fifth, which is titled, "A song of loves," and made, as the royal author tells us, unto the king; yea, dictated to him by the Holy Spirit of God, his tongue being but the pen of that ready writer;

her

her GOD, her Saviour, and Redeemer. *O LORD,*  
*thou art my God; I will exalt thee; I will praise thee,*  
*&c. As if he should say, “ However thou art—*  
*“ pleased to humble thyself, I will exalt thee, I will*  
*“ praise thy Name. Although the Jew deny thee, the*  
*“ Infidel blaspheme thee, I will ever acknowlege*  
*“ and worship thee, as my LORD, and my GOD.*  
*“ For thou hast done wonderful things :—And of all*  
*“ thy wonders, this of redemption is far the great-*  
*“ est: Thy counsels (whereby of old, even before the*  
*“ foundation of the world, thou wert pleased to lay*  
*“ that glorious design) are as firm and certain, as*  
*“ faithfulness and truth itself.”—And let every holy*  
*and humble man of heart join in concert with the*  
*church under the Law, and with St. Thomas, and all*  
*Christians, under the Gospel, and say to the Redeem-*  
*er, My LORD, and My GOD.—The faith is the same;*  
*the Saviour is the same.*

2. *For thou hast made of*  
*a city, an heap; of a de-*  
*fenced city, a ruin: a pa-*  
*lace of strangers, to be no*  
*city, it shall never be built:*

To thee the Father hath  
committed all judgment  
(*John v. 22.*) both of wrath  
and mercy, of life and death,  
rewards and punishments.—  
What are the ruins of mighty

*cities, of defenced towns, re-*  
*duced to heaps of rubbish, but the marks and monu-*  
*ments of thy justice? And, among many like in-*  
*stances of divine vengeance, this was the doom of*  
*thy own once favourite city, the earthly Jerusalem.*  
*She has of a long time been of thee rejected, for her*  
*denying and rejecting thee. So that now she is be-*  
*come the *palace of strangers*<sup>n</sup>; no more inhabited by*  
*her own natives; no more to be restored to that splen-*  
*dor and prosperity she once enjoyed under thy pro-*  
*tection. Her habitation is left desolate, her boasted*  
*temple rased to the ground, and never to be built*  
*again<sup>o</sup>.*

<sup>n</sup> As it is now by the *Turks* and *Mahometans*; no Jew being  
suffered to live there.                  <sup>o</sup> Mat. xxiii.

3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

So remarkable an instance of thy just judgment upon this obstinate and devoted city shall convince the whole world, that thou art of a truth the Son of God.—The conquerors <sup>p</sup> of nations shall submit themselves to thee; they shall glorify, whom thy own rebellious subjects have denied.—This prediction we have seen long since verified: The very city of *Rome*, the mistress and metropolis of the world, the chief *city of the terrible nations*, and head of the Gentile power, hath feared and confessed him, whom the *Jews* rejected, blasphemed, crucified.

4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

On the other hand, in the midst of judgment thou remembrest mercy, and shewest thyself the Saviour and Preserver, as well as the Judge, of men. The *poor* and *needy*, the humble and meek, are the peculiar care, and the chief objects of thy goodness. To these shalt thou prove a sure *refuge*, when the *storms* of the persecution arise for thy Name's sake.—They will find thee like a refreshing *shade*, to mitigate the *heat* and violence of the fiery trial; whilst the greatest fury of the *terrible ones* (the prince of hell, and his accursed associates) shall prove as impotent and vain, as a blast of wind *against the wall*.

5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the

When the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; when the kings of the earth stand up, and set themselves in opposition to thee, and the rulers take

*terrible ones shall be brought low.* counsel together against the Lord, and against thee, his Anointed; thou *shalt bring*

down, and frustrate, all their impious attempts. Their tumult and noise shall prove but (*brutum fulmen*) an empty sound, innoxious and harmless to thy servants, and destructive only to themselves. Their malicious preparations shall burst like thunder-clouds, and fall upon their own heads: Their most sanguine expectations shall end in disappointment and shame; and their *branch*, as well as root, be *brought low*, and utterly destroyed.

*6. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*

*marrow* so satisfying to the taste, nor liquor so grateful to the palate, or cordial to the stomach, as the plentiful supplies of divine grace (which alone are to be found in the church) to cheer and comfort, to nourish and strengthen, all her faithful children.—Nor is this rich *feast* to be confined only to the seed of *Israel*, but all people, even all nations of the world, are invited to come and partake of it.—“DRAW NEAR WITH FAITH,”—and *all* shall be welcome.—The true house of feasting is the church; and Christ the door<sup>q</sup>, by which all may enter.—But faith is the mouth<sup>r</sup> of the soul, by which she receives, tastes and feeds on the heavenly banquet.

*7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the* seat and region of light, the repository of truth. Here

<sup>q</sup> John x.

<sup>r</sup> Psalm. ciii.

*covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.*

alone shall light and immortality be brought to light: Here the Sun of righteousness arises, with healing in

his wings: From hence, are his bright beams diffused over all the world,—to scatter away the thick clouds of ignorance and error:—Here are all the treasures of wisdom, the constant residence of the divine Shekinah, which shall at length dissipate the idolatrous superstitions of the Gentile world, remove the *veil* of shadows and ceremonies from the Jew, and finally disperse the gross cloud of mortality, which, at present, intercepts from our sight the realities and essential verities of the other world; and thereby for ever *destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that, in this life, is spread over all nations.*

*8. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.*

The same LORD, Jesus Christ, who, by his Holy Spirit, his doctrine, and example, is “a light to light” “on the Gentiles, and the “glory of his people Is-“rael,” shall also become our great and mighty deliverer. Death, the king of terrors, and universal conqueror of mankind (who had reigned from *Adam*<sup>1</sup>) shall by him be conquered; first, by his yielding to its power, and then rising again from the dead; and, at the last day, by an universal resurrection of all mankind; which shall prove so absolute and entire a *victory over death*, as to leave it neither being nor name. Then shall the righteous triumph over it, and sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, “where is thy victory?”—Then will the time of refreshing

<sup>1</sup> *The Lord GOD.] Adhonai Jebovib*, which I have observed from sundry places, to be the more peculiar style of our Lord, the Son of God, and Second Person in the Holy Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> *Rom. v. 14.*

<sup>3</sup> *Cor. xv. 55.*

refreshing from the Lord come: Then will this our Lord and Saviour stand confessed by all the world to be the *Lord GOD*; and his divinity universally acknowledged: His proudest enemies shall then be forced to bow the knee, and be put in subjection under his feet. But on *his* own people the vessels of salvation, shall he display the most gracious endearments of mercy and favour; himself wiping away for ever all *tears from off their faces*, all sorrow from their hearts, and all those reproaches from their good names, which they had undergone for the sake of his.

*9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.*

and denied, whom these despised and vilified; this JESUS, for whose sake, and for whose faith, we have suffered persecution and reproach; is our G O D: This, this is he, in whom we have believed, whom we have *waited for*:—Not such as ye imagined him, a mere man, or a titular deity, but JEHOV A H, the LORD, the very and true G O D: Such as we confessed him, such we now behold him.

*10. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest; and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dung-hill.*

*In that awful day,* which shall be a day of terror to his enemies, but of joy and gladness to his saints; all his faithful servants shall triumphantly exult, and cry out, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, *Lo, this is our God, &c.*—This J E S U S, whom these crucified

After the revelation which God hath made of himself by his Son, in the Christian church, no farther dispensation is ever to be expected. But, as “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;” so, now that Christ

bath been once offered for the sins of many, *bis band shall REST*, from the great work which he came to do: So that the *Jew* is to expect no other *Messiah*, the Christian no other prophet, the apostate no other Saviour, or sacrifice for sin. But as the sabbath was the day of rest from all his works of creation, so the Gospel completes and finishes his more glorious work of redemption; and no other revelation is to be looked for, but that of his appearing the second time without sin (i. e. without any farther sacrifice for sin) when all the enemies of his church (whereof *Mab* is a type) *shall be trodden down as straw for the dunghill*; and never rise again to persecute, much less prevail against her.

11. *And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride, together with the spoils of their bonds.*

of a person *spreading forth his hands to swim*, than to conquer enemies, or save a lost world; yet, by this very action, yea, by this very posture, did he achieve his design. By the very wounds he sustained in his own *hands*, did he expiate, and atone for, the acts of *pride* and *injustice*, which ours have committed: For “there (even in those hands, so wounded, and so stretched out) was the hiding of his power.”

12. *And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall be bring down, lay*

And as to the method here foretold, whereby this glorious conqueror should accomplish the redemption of mankind, it was as wonderful in the execution, as successful in the issue. His arms, when extended at full length on the cross, might seem more like the posture

This is spoken to *Jerusalem*, which then was: As if he had said, “O *Jerusalem*, “ who art now so strongly

<sup>x</sup> *Lob.* iii. 4

“ fortified

*low, and bring to the ground,* “ fortified with walls and even to the dust. “ bulwarks, on thee shall “ he severely visit the blood

“ of his saints, and his own. He shall deliver thee “ up to thine enemies to be laid waste; thy bat- “ tlements will he take away (for *they are not the Lord's*, Jer. v. 10.); *bring to the ground, even to the dust.*”—And as this menacing prediction hath long since been accomplished on *Jerusalem*, so shall it likewise be executed on all those *high forts*, and haughty towers, which the proud wit, or carnal reason, of man, hath raised in opposition to the Gospel of Christ. The religion of nature shall be forced to veil to that of grace; wordly wisdom to that of the cross; profane reason to that of faith. All the efforts of heresy, irreligion, and profaneness, shall then become as so many cities of destruction; they shall all be broken in pieces, by the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands<sup>y</sup>; and the city of GOD, the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the church of *Christ* alone, shall remain in that day, and triumph for ever and ever.—“ When the judgment shall sit, they shall “ take away his [the enemy's] dominion, to con- “ sume and to destroy it unto the end. And the king- “ dom, and dominion, and the greatness of the “ kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given “ to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose “ kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all do- “ minions shall serve and obey him<sup>z</sup>.”—Then shall the kingdom be the Lord's, even that kingdom, which he has taught us (every day) to pray, *may come*; that kingdom which our church, at this time more particularly, excites us with an holy ambition to aspire after; that kingdom, wherein the will of our heavenly Father shall, even perfectly, and according to the most extensive sense of our daily petition, “ be “ done in earth, as it is in heaven:”—The new

<sup>y</sup> *Dan.* ii. 45.

<sup>z</sup> *Dan.* vii. 26, 27.

earth,

earth, the new heavens!—O glorious day ! O golden, truly golden, age! How should our hearts burn within us, at the prospect of such ineffable bliss!— Hear, O my soul, the Spirit and the Bride (even our own dear church) say, Come ; and let him that heareth, say, Come : Yea, he that testifieth these things, faith, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, **LORD JESUS<sup>a</sup>!**

<sup>a</sup> *Rev.* xxii.

*The*

## The Third Sunday in ADVENT.

The Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xxvi.

*Another HYMN of the CHURCH to CHRIST, with his answer; from ver. 19th, to the end.*

1. **I**N that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city: Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.<sup>b</sup>

**I**N that day.] That is, when Christ shall have executed judgment on his enemies (as is predicted in the foregoing chapter, ver. 12.) and brought down their

<sup>b</sup> *For walls and bulwarks.*] The Hebrew word *Chel*, signifies properly *antemurale*, a little wall before a greater; or a ditch, surrounding the wall, for its greater strength. So the LXXII. and Vulgate render this place, Τεχος κατ μεριτηχος, *Murus et antemurale*.—And by *Salvation* we must understand JESUS, who is not only the *Saviour*, according to the import of his name, but *Salvation* itself. This the original emphatically expresses in the abstract form; the verbal translation of which is, *Salvation will appoint* (i. e. he that is salvation will appoint) *walls and bulwarks*. So that our translators had no need to have inserted the exegetical words *God and for*. I find the Vulgate also renders the word *Jesuah Salvator*, not *Saluator*; *Salvator ponetur in eâ murus & antemurale*; which Monsieur Saci translates, *Le Sauveur en sera lui même la muraille & le boulevard*; then adds this note—Heb.—*salus ipsa*. Now this name [above every name] is our *wall and fore wall*, in several respects: 1. Because all we do, should be in the *Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Col. iii. 17.—2dly, Because, in time of danger, his Name, if called upon, giveth present confidence and safety, as St. Bernard (in Cantic.) assures us,—*Cui in periculis palpitanti invocatum*

their *high walls*, that is, shall have humbled the pride of our hearts, which is the greatest enemy to God and religion, “Casting down imaginations (as “the apostle, in the like military style, expresses “it), and every high thing, that exalteth itself against “the knowlege of God, and bringing into captivity “every thought to the obedience of Christ;” then *shall this song* of praise and thanksgiving *be sung* in the Christian church [the true *land of Judah*], to their great and glorious conqueror, and mighty deliverer.—“We, shall they triumphantly say, *we*, of the heavenly Jerusalem, have a strong and impregnable city; a city, which the gates of hell shall never prevail against.—Let other cities place their security in walls of stones, and gates of brass: Safety itself is our defense: Him that brings, yea, that bears the name of, yea, that is, SALVATION itself; even him hath God appointed for a wall, to surround and set out the pale and precinct of his church, and for a bulwark to secure it.” See *Psalms CXXV. 2.*

*2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.*

All nations are to be admitted into the Christian church: None excluded on any ceremonial account: All are welcome, of what country or people soever: All are citizens of the new Jerusalem, if justified, and made *righteous*, by faith in Christ: None will be shut out from the kingdom of heaven, who have received and kept *the truth*.—

*Open*

*tum Salvatoris Nomen non statim fiduciam præstítit, & depulit malum? Cui in adversis diffidenti, jamque difícienti, si hoc Nomen sonuit, defuit? fortitudo?* 3dly, His Name, through faith in his Name, is the strongest and best defence against our enemy the devil, to make him flee from us, and to quench his fiery darts.

‘ 2 Cor.

*Open ye the gates, &c.* saith the prophet : “ Lift up  
“ your heads, O ye gates,” saith the Psalmist <sup>d</sup>.—  
How, answereth the Gospel ? “ Thou [even thou,  
“ the L O R D, the ever-blessed J E S U S, Son of God, and  
“ Saviour of the world], hast opened the kingdom of  
“ heaven to all believers <sup>e</sup>.” And, “ The gates of  
“ it shall not be shut at all by day (for there shall  
“ be no night there) and they shall bring the glory  
“ and honour of the nations <sup>f</sup> into it ; and there shall  
“ in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, nei-  
“ ther whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh  
“ a lyē <sup>g</sup>,” &c. So that *we*, even we Gentiles, if we  
*keep the truth*, may boldly say, “ Open unto us, O  
“ Lord, the gates of righteousness, that we may go  
“ into them, and give thanks unto the Lord : This  
“ is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter  
“ into it <sup>h</sup>.”

3. *Thou wilt keep him  
in perfect peace, whose  
mind is stayed on thee : be-  
cause he trusteth in thee.*

*Peace* is then *perfect*, when we have it with God, our neighbour, and ourselves. This threefold peace, of heaven, of conscience, and of charity, is the sole gift and grace of Christ.—No other peace is *perfect* and complete, but that which he bestows. He is “ the God of peace ! ” — “ Peace I leave with you ; my peace give I unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you ; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” — How can he fail of the most *perfect* peace (at least the spiritual and internal) even in this militant state, altho' surrounded with innumerable enemies, whose *mind* is *stayed*, confirmed, established, *fixed* <sup>i</sup> on thee, the rock of ages, the centre of our faith and hope ? Who is so *afraid* there-

<sup>d</sup> *Psalm xxiv. 9.*

<sup>e</sup> *Te Deum.*

<sup>f</sup> *Nations.*] The word both in the Hebrew and Greek, generally signifies the *Heathen*, or *Gentiles*.

<sup>g</sup> *Rev. xxi.*

<sup>h</sup> *Psalm cxviii.*

<sup>i</sup> *Rom. xv. 33.*

<sup>k</sup> *John xiv. 27.*

on, that he proposes no other interest, no other happiness, no other end of his designs and actions, but to win Christ.—Thou, O Christ, art our peace<sup>1</sup>: thou art peace itself, the most perfect peace, to all that put their trust in thee!

4. *Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the L O R D J E H O V A H<sup>m</sup> is everlasting strength.*

*Trust ye, therefore, all ye people, in the Lord Jesus for ever; for in him, whose name is JAH JEHOVAH, is everlasting strength.—He is JAH, as he emptied himself of his glory*

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes. ii. 14.*

<sup>m</sup> *Lord Jehovah.]* Heb. *Jah Jehovah*. Two names of God, and peculiar to him. The first is frequent in the Psalms, and in the Prophets.—*Hallelujah*,—Praise him in his Name *Jah*, &c. “ This, as Bishop Andrews \* observes, is the contraction of *Jeho-* “ *vah*, signifying *Deum diminutum*, God in the diminutive; con- “ sequently this name belongs only to the SON.—JEHOVAH is “ the essential name of God, and communicable to no other but the “ ever-blessed Trinity. It is, as the Bishop goes on, *Tetragram-* “ *maton*, a word of four letters, much written of, and much *specu-* “ *led*, and divers speculations gathered out of it; as namely, that “ there are three letters, according to the number of the three per- “ sons in the Trinity; and that of these three, the first signifieth “ power, the proper adjunct of the Father; the second wisdom and “ knowlege, the proper adjunct of the Son; the third love, the “ proper adjunct of the Holy Ghost. And that the second letter is “ doubled, to teach us, that the Second Person should take on him “ two natures, of God and man.” It appears in the life of *Pythagoras*, that he had learned in *Egypt* the name of the true God, even the mysterious and ineffable name JEHOVAH; and, observing that, in the original, it was composed of four letters, he rendered it, in his mother-tongue, by the word *Tétrekton*, that is *Quaternary*, or the number *four*; and adds the explication of it, that it properly signifies, *the source of nature that perpetually rolls along*; for so the Greek imports, in the following Golden verses, where he solemnly swears by that sacred Name:

Nαι μα τὸν ἀμετίχα φύχα παραδίνα Τέτρεκτον  
Παγὰν δεννάς φύσεως.—

*This by his Name I swear, whose sacred lore  
First to my soul reveal'd the mystic Four,  
Source of eternal nature, and almighty pow'r.*

\* On the ten commandments, p. 99.

glory to redeem us ; he is JEHOVAH, as Lord of all, and “ over all, God blessed for evermore ” ; and therefore “ able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him .” Able also to crush all that resist, all that deny him, with his almighty arm.—“ Kiss therefore the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the right way : Blessed are all they that put their trust in him ! ”

5. *For he bringeth down them that dwell on high, the lofty city he layeth it low, he layeth it low, even to the ground, he bringeth it even to the dust.*

Yet it is not by a mere act of power that he will subdue the proud opposers of his will, but by a new and unheard of way. He will put off his strength, and conquer by weakness. He will triumph over their rage

by yielding to it ; over envy and spite by gentleness and love.—By descending from his throne, laying aside his glory, and making himself of no reputation, he shall bring down the most aspiring flights of vanity and pride.—The ambition of man, which affects to dwell on high, and to excel each other in superiority and degree, shall stand confounded at such humility .—His only contention will be, to outdo the meanest in lowliness of heart, as well as in appearance. So that the *lofty city*, all that exalts itself against the obedience of Christ ; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ; all that is in the world, this proud capital of *Satan’s kingdom*, which has so long tyrannized over his saints ; shall, by his descent upon earth, be brought down, even to the ground :—By his incarnation and sufferings shall it be confounded ; and, by his death, his shameful death, be levelled with the *dust*, and finally destroyed.—And O the happy sense this will prove to every soul that shall reduce this example of the Son of God to imitation !

<sup>n</sup> Rom. ix.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. vii. 5.

<sup>p</sup> Psalm ii.

<sup>q</sup> Thus was verified that saying of the apostle, *The weakness of God is stronger than man.* 1 Cor. i. 25.

tation! that, in contemplating his wonderful humiliations, his lowly advent in the flesh, his meek sufferings, and ignominious death, shall follow him thro' every stage of his passion; descend with him from on high; and suffer his own pride, his haughtiness, and ambition, to be *brought down*, to be *laid low*, even to the ground; to be laid low, as he was, even to the dust.—The cross of Christ is the death of pride, and the womb of humility.—Can dust and ashes be proud, when it sees its Maker laid in the dust of death and shame?

6. *The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.*

Though poor, they shall despise its riches; though reviled, they shall condemn its honours; though needy, they shall renounce its plenty and pleasures.—And well they may, having such an inheritance in reversion; such far greater treasures, such enduring substance, such an exceeding weight of glory, in a better world!

7. *The way of the just is uprightness: thou must upright, dost weigh the path of the just,*

tread; and this path O thou *must upright* (both pattern, and instructor, of all righteousness) shalt mark out by thine own steps; not only by the word, recommending the straight and narrow way, that leadeth to life, but shewing us, by thine own example, how to walk, and how to keep, therein.—Thou teachest us how to ponder the path of our feet, that so our way may be established<sup>1</sup>. Thou makest it so plain,

The meek and lowly disciples of the humble JESUS shall, as their master did, trample on all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

Though poor, they

*The way*, by which the *just* man shall pursue happiness, is not such as the world prescribes and follows; but *uprightness* and justice itself.

This is the *path* that he shall

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iv. 26.

by thine own steps, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein<sup>s</sup>.

*8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy Name, and to the remembrance of thee.*

The true servants of Christ are distinguished, not only by a conformity to his righteousness and humility, but even to his sufferings. They attend on his cross: They daily take it up, and follow him: They possess their souls

in patience, while his judgments are upon them; not accepting deliverance from any worldly and unlawful means, but ever waiting his good time and pleasure for their release.—While others therefore faint or fall away in the day of trial, the faithful disciples of Jesus shall rejoice, and be exceeding glad, that they are counted worthy to suffer for his Name's sake.—His salutary Name shall be their constant refuge, and sure anchor of hope; and the memorial of his passion a never-failing spring of comfort and support.—Well therefore may the desire of our soul be to thy Name, O Saviour, and to the sweet remembrance of thee.—For how sweet, how much sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb, are those thy last and parting words,—“ Do this in remembrance of me!” And, at another time, “ Let not your hearts be troubled, I will come again.”—And O that every soul that hears this, might cheerfully answer, with thy beloved apostle, and say, “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen. “ So be it.” *Rev. xxii.*

*9. With my soul I have desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants*

This is the language of every devout soul.—The true Christian is a true lover of Jesus. Every such an one will say, “ O thou Saviour and Preserver of men, with all the affec-

<sup>s</sup> *Isa. xxxv. 8.*

<sup>t</sup> *Job xix. 1.*

*of the world will learn  
righteousness.*

" tions of my soul have I de-  
" fired thee : In the day-time  
" have I sought thee, in thy

“ word, in thy works, in thy servants, at thy house,  
“ and at thy table.—*In the night* have I remember’d  
“ thee in my bed, and thought upon thee when I  
“ was waking. And O extend thy mercy, to all  
“ that bear thy name; that we *may seek thee early*;  
“ *early* in the time of life; *early* every morning,  
“ while it is called to-day; before the evil day come,  
“ the day of thy justice, when the day of mercy  
“ will be past and gone. It will then be too late to  
“ learn *righteousness*, when the night is come, and no  
“ man can work.—In the mean time, let every judg-  
“ ment prove a lecture of virtue, an unhappy prepara-  
“ tive for our last end, and fit us all for thy tre-  
“ mendous appearance at the last day;—that we  
“ may meet thee with joy, and not with grief.”

10. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

If favour and mercy be shewed to a vicious man, he will rather be confirmed by his prosperity to continue in sin, than to forsake it: Nor will the most shining examples of piety reclaim him from his evil courses. He will not reflect, as he ought,

with gratitude on the goodness of God, nor stand in awe of his *majesty* and justice; but rather be hardened in his wickedness by the divine forbearance, and despise the long-suffering of the Lord.—How great then, how gracious an act of mercy, is it of our heavenly Father, to visit our offences with the rod now, and our sin with scourges! to send his afflictions, as harbingers, to warn us of the approaching judgment; to serve as monitors and correctives of our sluggish and stubborn hearts! to be his forerunners to preach repentance; his baptists to cleanse us, before he come in person to judge!

When

11. *LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

When God's hand is lifted up, either in mercy, to hold forth the golden sceptre, or in justice, to execute vengeance, how obdurate and blind must they be, who will not see either his goodness or severity!

Who have no sense of his almighty power, and of their own danger!—But the time will come, when they shall see, whether they will or no; they shall see all these divine truths and threatenings verified in their own destruction. Then shall they feel what they would not believe; then shall they be ashamed for their causeless envy at the people and friends of God, and be devoured by the fire of his enemies.—The fire of those enemies of God, whom they now serve, shall devour them; shall devour, but not consume; torment, but not destroy. Hell is an ever-living death, an ever-dying life!

12. *LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*<sup>u</sup>

But as to us, who are thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, thou, Lord, wilt ordain peace for us; if not with the world, yet peace with thee; that peace which

the world can neither give, nor take away; that inward peace, which passeth all understanding—of carnal men to conceive, or the best of men to express. This is a gift ordained for thy church only, and for her faithful children.—And this, not for our merits or works, but for thy own sake, who art both the author and finisher of all our works. For all those works, to which pardon and peace are promised here,

<sup>u</sup> *Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*] Heb. *For us.* And the particle *also* belongs more properly to the verb *wrought*, than to the pronoun *thou*. So that it ought rather to be rendered, *Thou hast also wrought all our works for us.*

and g'ory, honour, and immortality, hereafter, have been first performed by thee *for us*; and are now wrought by thee *in us*. Thy obedience and perfect righteousness is imputed to us, thro' faith in thee: Our obedience is wrought *in us*, by thy Spirit which is in us: Nor can any work be intitled to thy rewards or acceptance, but what flows from thee, is wrought in thee, and performed for thee.

13. *O L*ORD our God,  
*other lords besides thee have bad dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.*

can any, that sincerely return to God, and have ever tasted how gracious the Lord is, how tender his mercy, how sweet, how forbearing, his goodness, how can they, without mourning and great regret, look back on their former sinful life? How can they, without horror and confusion of face, reflect, that other Lords, besides their Maker and Redeemer, even those very enemies of their Lord, whom in baptism they abjured, *have bad so long dominion over them?* —O that our tears for such treachery and ingratitude might expiate the guilt of every past offence! But it was thy mercy redeemed us from the wretched bondage of sin; 'tis thy grace alone can preserve us in our duty.—Thy Name, thro' faith in thy Name, shall give us a perfect soundness from the deadly disease of sin; yea, thro' thy Name shall we tread them under, that rise up against us.

14. *They are dead, they shall not live: they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and*

are represented in a most lively and affecting manner, the spiritual moanings of the church, and of every penitent soul, for their former offences.—And how

In the foregoing part of our lesson, the temporal enemies of the church, the world, and wicked men, are chiefly spoken of; she now mentions her conflict with her

*made all their memory to perish.* her spiritual adversaries, sin and Satan: These, faith she, are dead; that is, mortified

and divested of their reigning power over us.—Observe we hence, to our comfort, the holiness of the spirit of baptism; the first effect of baptismal grace is to make us die unto sin; it is “a death unto sin, “ and a new birth unto righteousness.” The next blessed effect is, to make sin die in us.—The root of sin is in the appetites, the passions, and the senses; in the animal and inferior, rather than in the rational and superior, faculties of the soul. If these (which St. Paul calls the flesh, with its affections and lusts) be subdued and *dead* unto sin; if (as our church speaks \*) all carnal affections die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit do live and grow in us, then may we also sing this triumphal song over all our spiritual enemies, “*They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise:—Therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, by thy own cross and passion:—Thou wert made sin to destroy sin:—Thou hast made their very memory to perish.*”

15. *Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation, thou art glorified; thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.*

As all are not *Israel* that are of *Israel*, so, on the other hand, all true believers, of what kindred or people soever they be, are the seed of faithful *Abraham*, are all children of *Israel*, all brethren, all fellow-citizens of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, who

is the mother of us all; and therefore they make but one nation, wheresoever dispersed, or how far soever removed to the ends of the earth. “For we are all one in Christ Jesus,” faith St. Paul to his *Galatian* converts. And “if Christ’s, then are we *Abra-*

\* Office of Baptism.

y C. iii. 28.

“*ham’s, seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” And O! what a surprising *increase* was this addition of the Gentiles to the family of *Abraham*; and how truly was that promised blessing verified, “ That it “ should be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and “ as the sand which is upon the sea-shore<sup>z</sup>!”—Yet this increase was not effected by human means, by virtue of a natural propagation from *Abraham*, but by the spiritual birth in Christ, by whom, and thro’ whom, we Gentiles are begotten anew unto a lively hope; and to him alone this wonderful increase is here ascribed. This is strongly expressed, as a thing much to be observed, by that repetition, *Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation.*—The words are the same; but the different emphasis, wherewith they are to be pronounced gives an improved variety to the sense. *Thou HAST increased the nation* (according to the promise :) *Thou hast INCREASED* and multiplied it (by adding the Gentiles to the church.) But it is *THOU, O LORD JESUS*, and *Thou* only, who hast made this wonderful increase; and for this cause thou art *glorified*.—As the *nation* of believers is increased, so is thy glory.—Thy glory is enlarged by enlarging the *Jewish* creed, and rectifying the faith of the Gentile world. Thy glory also is now added to thy Father’s glory: Thy own petition (*John xvii. 5.*) is granted; “ To be glorified WITH thy Father, with the glory “ which thou had’st with HIM before the world was.” So that now the whole catholic church, composed of Jew and Gentile, as joined and compacted in one body, do, and ever will, join in that seraphic hymn, “ Glory be to the Father, AND to the SON, &c.”—And let every Christian say, *Amen.*

Worldly men either sink

16. *LORD, in trouble under their troubles, or grow  
have they fitted thee, they discontented, and murmur*

<sup>z</sup> *Gen. xxii. 17*

against

*poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.*

against providence. But the suffering Christian's character is patience and *prayer*. He shuns not the cross, when it lies in the way of his duty, but meekly takes it up, and follows his Master. He flies not even from the rod when lifted up, but rather gets him to his Lord right humbly, and *visits* him in his trouble. He *pours out a prayer*, not an angry complaint, *when his chastening is upon him*. Thus the pious *David*, “Thou *dist* turn thy face from me, and I was troubled. Then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and gat me to my Lord right humbly<sup>a</sup>.”—Thus every dutiful child, when he sees the rod lifted up, flies into the arms of his offended parent.—A servile fear is ever a base fugitive, and runs away from correction; but a filial fear is confident of mercy, because it loves the hand that strikes. The good man sees mercy in punishment, and love in the very anger of God: He bears the scourge with patience, as justly due to his sin: He bears it with joy, as the sure way to peace; yea, as a certain mark and token of paternal love. See *Heb.* chap. xii. ver. 6, &c.

17. *Like as a woman with child that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.*

18. *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the*

The Jewish church, continuing her speech, laments here the small success the had in bringing converts to God.—We are told, indeed, in the Gospel-history, that the Scribes and Pharisees took much pains, and compassed sea and land, to make proselytes; but with all this labour they brought forth nothing but *wind*: So far from bringing children to God (as our Lord tells them, *Mat.*

<sup>a</sup> *Psalm xxx.*

*inhabitants of the world* xxiii. 15.) that they made fallen.

those they converted two-fold more the children of hell than themselves.--Thus the *Jewish* religion, under the conduct of such teachers, *wrought no deliverance in the earth*; nor would the *inhabitants* of the world ever have *fallen*, or been reduced to the knowlege and obedience of the true God, had not the Son of God himself come to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and published the divine law, by the preaching of the Gospel.

19. *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

Here Christ answers the foregoing complaint of the *Jewish* church. The words not only promise a greater success after his coming and resurrection; yea, not only (in the spiritual and mystic sense) contain an assurance, that all of his church, who were *dead* in trespasses and sin, should be quickened and *arise* to newness of life; but even, according to the letter, that all who were dead, and in their graves, should, in virtue of his resurrection, be raised again to life, and this mortal body put on immortality, even that immortality it had lost by the fall. Yea, moreover, if we view this promise in another light, may we not say, that it hath already received a double completion? First, mystically, according to that sentiment and doctrine of St. Paul, that when Christ rose from the dead, all Christians were virtually raised along with him<sup>b</sup>; so that, in effect, when his body, which hath been dead, was raised again, all believers, who are members of that body, were likewise raised at the same time. Secondly, literally, and in very deed, this prophecy had its actual accomplishment, at the instant of our Lord's resur-

<sup>b</sup> See Col. iii. ver. 12, 13, &c. iii. 1.

rection, when, as is expressly recorded in the Gospel<sup>c</sup>, “ many bodies of the saints which slept did arise, “ and were seen of many.”—They, in fact, arose with his dead body; they were both witnesses and proofs of Christ’s resurrection; and their resurrection is an earnest of ours at the last day.

*Thy dew is as the dew of herbs.]* That is, thy graces shall have a vivifying and fruitful virtue, like the *dew* and rain upon *herbs* and plants, which raise them again in the spring, as it were out of their graves, and cause them to grow and flourish, to blossom and look gay.—But the *dew of herbs*, and the dew of grace, are the sole gifts of God: They both descend from heaven: They are not ours, but as they are sent down from above, and conferred on his church and servants, by him who is the giver of ever good and perfect gift.

20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers<sup>d</sup>,*  
*and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were*  
*for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*

21. *For behold, the*

In times of trouble the Christian’s safest retreat from danger is, *first*, the grave of Christ, that is, the meditation of his passion and sufferings. Then, *secondly*, to enter into his closet, yea, into his heart; that is, have recourse

<sup>c</sup> Mat. xxvii. 52.

<sup>d</sup> *Enter thou into thy chambers.]* This, by Clemens Romanus, ch. 50. of his epistle to the *Corinthians*, as quoted by the learned and pious Bishop Bull (serm. 3. of his first vol.) is produced as a proof of the separate place and state of all faithful souls, presently after death; which *chambers* that father calls the *region of the godly*. And as St. Clement took the proof from this 20th verse of our lesson, so the Bishop adds, that the words of the 19th verse were, by the *Jews* before our Saviour’s time, understood of the real and proper resurrection of the dead at the last day; as it appears most evidently, from the *Chaldee* paraphrase on the place.—And (as he goes on) no less certain it is, that the *chambers* of God’s people (in verse 20.) were, by the antient *Jews*, also mystically expounded of the receptacles of the souls of the righteous till the resurrection. This he proves from the apocryphal book, 2 *Ezdras*, chap. iv. ver. 35, 36.

*LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

recourse to prayer, and a strict repentance. These are the *chambers* we are here called upon to hide ourselves in, until the indignation be overpast. This is also the advice of the Psalmist,

“ Commune with your own hearts, and in your chambers, and be still.”—To *shut our doors about us*, is to shut close the doors and avenues of our senses, and lock out all but God and his blessed Spirit.—Both good and bad men in this world have their stoms; but the good man is under covert, retired and safe in his *chamber*, and in a tight warm house; he hears the storm, but feels it not. Whereas the wicked is like a man without shelter, exposed to all the inclemency and rage of the weather.—The term also of suffering to the *people* of God is but short, it is, as it were, but for a moment, a little moment, in comparison of their own future bliss, and their enemies future misery.—Their heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,—the morning of their eternal day.—Be easy then, O my soul, and wait with patience for the coming of thy Lord: Thou needest to have no other care, but to be one of his *people*. Then may’st thou think of his resurrection with pleasure, and expect thy own with joy: Then may’st thou look up, and lift up thy head with a full assurance of hope, that thy redemption draweth nigh;—when this sinful world, with all its troubles and vanities shall have an end.—Amen. So be it.

\* *Psalms iv.*

† See ch. xxii. 18, 19.

## The Fourth Sunday in ADVENT.

## Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Ch. xxx.

P R E F A C E.

**U**NDER the character of the Jewish people making alliances with Egypt, and placing a confidence in the friendship and confederacy of a nation, by which they had once been enslaved and so cruelly used, is represented to us the strange propensity of human nature, even in the children of God, to turn back again to the slavery of sin, and revolt from him to the service of those spiritual enemies, whom in baptism they renounced.

How apt are we all to send ambassadors and presents to Egypt, that is, to court the favour of this wicked world, altho' its friendship be enmity with God<sup>a</sup>! To slight and reject his holy word, when it thwarted our lusts and passions; and even to prosecute and revile the ministers of God, for reproving our faults, and speaking the truth! To say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things<sup>b</sup>, &c.— But what advantage or profit, what good end or true pleasure, will such a peace with our mortal enemies procure us? Nay rather what can the consequence be of such rebellion against our Maker, such a league with his and our own inveterate adversaries, but certain disappointment, and inevitable ruin? All the succour or com-

<sup>a</sup> James iv. 4.<sup>b</sup> Isa. xxx. 10.

fort we expect from them, as we are here assured, will end in shame and reproach. They shall not be a help, nor a profit. All the flattering prospects of happiness and pleasure, wherewith they sooth our hopes, shall miserably deceive us; and prove as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in an high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly, and at an instant<sup>i</sup>;—oppressing, with sudden and unexpected ruin, the unhappy wretch that flies to it for shelter.—Again, the world's fairest promises, and most substantial enjoyments, are but like an earthen vessel; brittle at best; but, when dashed in pieces, of no manner of use or service: So that there shall not be found, in the bursting of it, a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit<sup>k</sup>.

Here then we see, that the necessary and unavoidable consequence of seeking felicity where it is not to be found, is to miss the very thing we are hunting after; to embrace an empty cloud, and instead of fruition, to meet with vanity and confusion, disappointment and misery.—What God pronounces of the Egyptians, and the strength of Pharaoh, that it is but a shadow, and that they should help in vain, and to no purpose, is equally true of all worldly helps and pursuits, exclusive of God.—Whatever doth not promote the one thing needful, is not necessary, nor worth our care: Whatever is contrary to this, be it ever so grateful to flesh and blood, ever so plausible and inviting, must needs be destructive of the true interest of our immortal souls, whose salvation and happiness could not be purchased by anything less than the precious blood of Jesus. We may therefore plainly see, that the instruction which the church principally aims at, in this lesson, is the absolute necessity of Christ's coming into the world, in order to make that gracious purchase for us: So that the true moral of our lesson is, what the apostle<sup>j</sup> affirms, “There is no other name under heaven given unto man, whereby we may be saved, but only the Name

<sup>i</sup> Isa. xxx. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Verse 14.

<sup>j</sup> Acts iv. 12.

“ of

"*of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"—*Whose blessed Advent we are therefore now commemorating.*

The Fourth Sunday in ADVENT.

The Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xxx.

1. **W**O to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

**H**EAR we what the Lord saith against his people for their apostasy, lest, by imitating their crime, we partake of their wo. For what but wo and misery can be the unhappy effect of their folly, who, in

their distress, despise the glorious liberty and privilege of the children of God, and forsake their own mercy? Who, altho' they have been admitted into his house and family the church, altho' they have sworn allegiance to him as their King, and have vowed faithful obedience as to their Lord and Master, with love and duty inviolable to him as their Father and only Benefactor, do yet *ask counsel, but not of him*; that is to say, seek for help in their dangers, relief in their want, for comfort in their sorrows, for happiness in their enjoyments, or direction in their streights, from any other hand rather than his. How strange a conduct is this! How monstrous the folly! Yea rather, how horrible a rebellion, when we desert and run away from him to his most bitter and avowed enemies, seeking from them those very blessings and helps, which he has promised to give, and are in his sole power to bestow!—What is this but *adding sin to sin* not only adding actual transgressions to our original corruption, but the guilt of wilful treason to our other crimes?

We

2. *That walk to go down into Egypt (and have not asked at my mouth), to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt.*

3. *Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.*

prayer ; and to strengthen ourselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt !—And who is this Pharaoh, but that accursed spirit, whose works and bondage we renounced ? What is his strength, but the lusts and corruptions of our sinful flesh ? What the shadow of Egypt, but the pomps and empty vanities of this miserable world ? And what are we, but the very rebellious children here reprobated and condemned, for preferring the friendship, or rather slavery, of these our spiritual enemies, to the favour and protection of almighty God ?—Can we wonder to see the Jews so fond of Egyptian bondage, and not read our own wretched character in their conduct and example ? And what will the issue be, of following their steps, but the like shame and confusion ?

4. *For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.*

5. *They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.*

We were inlisted, in baptism, the soldiers of Christ, to fight manfully under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil : But, alas ! how prone are we all to forsake the Captain of our salvation, and to take part against him with those his enemies ! to slight the ways and opportunities he affords us of consulting him, by his holy word, or

So fond were the Jews of their Egyptian allies, that even the good Hezekiah sent ambassadors to treat with them for succours against Senacherib. Thus the best of men are too apt, on the first appearance of danger or surprize, to have recourse to means not warranted by

the laws of God; to seek to human aids, rather than those helps which the grace of God had provided;—to *cover themselves with a covering, but not of his Spirit.*—But experience will soon convince them of their folly, and make them ashamed of their own weakness, and the weakness, as well as unlawfulness, of such supports.—Nay, the best end is, to be *ashamed* of them, and to count them our *reproach.*

6. *The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.*

7. *For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.*

It is not usual for God's prophets, nor suitable to the dignity of the prophetic office, to denounce *burdens*, that is to say, heavy judgments, against *beasts*, except as they are the instruments or emblems of man's wickedness; and then they suffer for sins and follies not their own.—Here we find mistaken man employing his *asses* and *camels* to *carry*, or rather throw away, his *treasures*, upon a project that should *not profit*; and therefore acting a part more stupid than the *beasts* which he employed.—

And to aggravate the foolishness of worldly wisdom, and to let us see not only what expence, but what infinite hazard, it will engage us in; we here read, that the road of these *Jewiſh* ambassadors lay thro' deserts infested with fierce beasts, and dreadful serpents, and that the very country they travelled to, was a *land of trouble and anguish*;—yet none of these things put a check to their attempt.—Alas! how great pains will most men take to be miserable; how little, to be happy! How eager, how unwearyed, are we to serve the world; how cold and languid in the service of God! And what is this world we so fondly

fondly doat upon, but a land of trouble and anguish ? What is this life, if we venture to wander out of the bounds and precincts of our Palestine, the church and city of the living God, but a wide howling wilderness, whence come the young and the old lion, the devil with all his accursed brood, seeking to devour us ? A world more viperous, and our own lusts and passions more fiery and envenomed, than any serpent, to destroy us ?—Take heed then, O my soul, that thou stray not out of the ways of virtue and religion ; and remember, with humility remember, the danger of all carnal presumption, and that thy safety lies in this modest sense of thy own abilities, that it is *thy strength to sit still* ; thy truest courage is to keep within thy tents, and wait to see the salvation of God. Be neither too forward to tempt danger, nor too timorous when it approaches : But be well persuaded of the truth of what the Lord faith concerning this, that thy strength is to *sit still*, in patience, till he arrive to help thee.

8. Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come<sup>m</sup> for ever and ever.

“ is of any private interpretation, neither came it “ of old time by the will of man, but holy men of “ God spake as they were moved by the Holy “ Ghost.” And as the Jews were the keepers of the oracles of God, they were also the witnesses of the authenticalness of those sacred records; for they were (as here we see it commanded) written before them in a table, written in their presence; that, although they obeyed not the word, they might, nevertheless, be the evidence to the world of its being

Hence we learn, that the word of God to man is a written word ; and for that reason, and by way of eminence, is called the SCRIP- TURE<sup>n</sup>. Note we also, that

“ No prophecy of Scripture

<sup>m</sup> Heb. The latter days. <sup>m i. e.</sup> Writing. <sup>o</sup> 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

genuine

genuine and true. And it was noted in a Book, that it might descend to us; not serving for their instruction only, but for ours also, who live in the latter days, and upon whom the ends of the world are come.

9. *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD.*

10. *Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.*

11. *Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy one of Israel to cease from before us.*

This prediction has been eminently fulfilled in the Jews rejection of our Lord, when he came in his state of humiliation to save and redeem the world. It is now also, in these latter days, these perilous times, as truly fulfilled in many Christians.—We also are a rebellious people, lying children. We all promise to obey; but who performs? Who is there amongst us that has patience or humility enough, even to bear the law of the Lord, that can bear, much less

practise, the self-denying doctrines of their crucified Redeemer? Who is there that uses any diligence to add to their faith virtue, to virtue temperance, &c.? Nay, who is there that quarrels not as faithful ministers, or charitable reprovers if they offer to check their undue liberties, or favourite vices? If they preach up the necessity of repentance, and the duties of a mortified and divine life; is not their answer, at this day, in effect, tho' not in direct words, the very same as was foretold, *Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, &c.*?—Yea, how many of late are there risen up amongst us, whose rebellion has proceeded so far as even to deny the Lord that bought them; who join with the Jews in rejecting their Saviour, and will acknowledge none for true prophets, but such as prophesy deceits; such as will go out of the way, and turn men aside out of

*the right path; such as will conspire with them to cause the Holy one of Israel to cease from before us.*

12. *Wherfore thus saith the Holy one of Israel, Because ye despise this Word, and trust in<sup>p</sup> oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:*

13. *Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in an high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.*

14. *And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel, that is broken in pieces, he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it, a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.*

Who is this *Holy one of Israel*, but the same whom the devils confessed to be the *Holy one of God* (*Luke iv. 34.*) even the Christ and Son of God? He, whom the *Jews* formerly crucified and denied, whom all wicked Christians despise, and whom now our present heretics and unbelievers reject and blaspheme? And what will be the consequence of this infidelity, this more than devilish infidelity, and presumption (for devils believe and tremble) but a sudden and inevitable ruin? Their vain trust and confidence in human means (such as *fraud*, and oppression of the truth, and of those who assert it) or in human reason (which

is but mere *perverseness*, when opposed to divine wisdom, and to the truth as it is in *Jesus*) may seem like an *high wall*, in their own conceit, to screen and secure them from what they fear; but shall prove in the end like a *breach* in a tottering *wall*, which, when it once begins to bulge out, falls down *at an instant*, without any warning, and crushes all those who made it their shelter and defence: Or like the broken sherd's of a *potter's vessel*, which can never be pieced or cemented, never employed again to any necessary use.—And who is this *he*, that shall thus *break* them *in pieces*, but he whom they thus reject and oppose?

<sup>p</sup> *Heb.* Fraud.

This WORD, whom they *despise*, the very Son of the living God? For of him, and to him, it is expressly said by his eternal Father, “Thou shalt break them “with a rod of iron: Thou shalt dash them *in pieces* “like a *porter's vessel*<sup>¶</sup>.”—These things being so, the following advice of the same holy Psalmist is too applicable to our present unhappy times:—“ Be wise “now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges “of the earth: Serve the LORD with fear, and re-“joice with trembling: Kiss the SON, lest he be “angry, and so ye perish from the right way, when “his wrath is kindled, but a little: Blessed are all “they that put their trust in HIM<sup>r</sup>.

15. *For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy one of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.*

In these words are contained the whole sum and substance of the Gospel, its author, its beginning, its end and design. Its author is our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who is here rightly styled, *The Lord GOD, the Holy one of Israel*; for in *Israel*, or

the church, Christ, who is her head, is only and properly holy, and therefore rightly called, *The Holy one*: So also the church herself styles and confesses him in her eucharistical and seraphic hymn, in our communion office;—“O Lord, the only-begotten “Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, “Son of the Father, &c. have mercy upon us; for “Thou only art holy, &c.”—The beginning of the Gospel is repentance and faith; and both these are here significantly expressed by *returning* and *rest*. For repentance is the conversion and *returning* of the heart to God, whom by sin we had forsaken: And what is faith, but a *resting* and firm dependence on the word and promises of God?—The end and design of the Gospel is our salvation; for which reason it is called

<sup>¶</sup> *Psalm ii.*

<sup>r</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>s</sup> *Adonai Jehovah.*

H 2

<sup>t</sup> *Heb. Hope.*

<sup>u</sup> *The*

“ The glad tidings of peace and salvation.” Of this we are here assured; *In returning and rest shall ye be saved.*

But man is strangely averse to these principles of the doctrine of Christ, especially to that of faith. For tho’ it be said, *In quietness and confidence shall be your strength;* yet it follows, *And ye WOULD NOT.*—It is certain nothing can be plainer than the way to eternal happiness, which the Gospel has pointed out to us; and yet man will not walk in this way, even because he will not believe.—He is too obstinate to acknowledge his faults, and too proud to repent of what he has done amiss: He is too vain to believe what exceeds his carnal reason, and too full of conceit to submit his understanding to the wisdom of God, and the mysteries of the Christian faith.

16. *But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you, be swift.*

17. *One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.*

18. *And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment; blif-*

And for this obdurate incredulity, what remedy is there, but judgment without mercy, where mercy hath been despised? Justice will be glorified in their punishment, whom goodness and mercy could not reclaim.—They shall be made examples and monuments of divine vengeance, to serve like a *beacon on the top of a mountain,* to warn others of the danger, which they themselves refused to avoid.

Christ is not slack in the execution of his justice, or his mercy, as some men count slackness; but he times all things with the utmost exactness, for *he is a God of judgment:* He defers punishing the guilty, yea,

*ed are all they that wait  
for him.*

yea, sometimes the most daring offenders: At another time, he delays the

returns of peace to the humble penitent:—Not because he cannot immediately avenge himself when he is provoked, or because he will not pardon as soon as we apply. But the rule he governs his procedure by, in either case, is his mercy: He *waits* for the sinner that his long-suffering and goodness may lead him to repentance: He *waits* for the penitent, that he may teach him patience, and confirm his humility.—It is to be *gracious*, that he *waits* for all.—But they, and they only, are the *blessed* and truly happy ones, who *wait for HIM*: Whose hopes are so revived by repentance, as to expect his mercy; and so strengthened by faith, as to wait his time.—*Blessed are all they that so wait for him!*

19. *For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more; be will be very gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.*

20. *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:*

21. *And thine ears shall bear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*

From hence to the 27th verse are foretold and described, in the sublime and figurative stile of the prophetic language, the many and great privileges and blessings of the Christian religion; the abundance of grace and mercy, of light and glory, peace and comfort, purity and holiness, which should be poured forth and shed abroad in the hearts of all true believers in Christ. These (being now the only people of God, when the Jew is rejected for unbelief, and the earthly *Jerusalem* destroyed) shall dwell at the heavenly *Jerusalem*: Forever

22. *Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstrual cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.*

23. *Then shall he give the rain of thy seed that thou shalt sow the ground withal, and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.*

24. *The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan.*

25. *And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, river and streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.*

dwell in Zion, the church of the living God, the mountain of the Lord's house, which shall not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.—*They shall weep no more, for the troubles and afflictions of this world; but rather rejoice in the midst of sorrows, and count it all joy when they fall into persecutions, and divers temptations; knowing that tribulation is the portion left them of their heavenly Master, as the only way to bliss; that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.”—They shall cry, but it is with the heart only, and in prayer, and God will be gracious, not only to hear the voice of their cry, but immediately answer their requests.*—Ver. 20. *And though he give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction,* what is

this but the necessary and wholesome discipline of mortification and repentance, to purify and cleanse away the natural corruption of the heart? It may also shadow to us the very memorial of our dear Redeemer's passion, even those sacred elements of bread and wine, wherewith we are fed at his table. This to him indeed was the *bread of adversity, and the waters of affliction;* but to us, the bread of life, and the cup of salvation. Its salutary virtue not only conforms

conforms us to his image, and nourishes the soul; but, by the very sorrow it produces in the heart for sin, fills it, at the same time (in proportion ever to that pious sorrow) with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—*Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more*, as the Jewish doctors were, by their frequent captivities; at best, were confined to a narrow corner of the world, the land of *Israel*; and now they and their priesthood are totally removed. But the Christian church is of unlimited extent, catholic and universal. Her pastors and *teachers* are not confined, nor their office and commission limited, to any particular part of the earth; but “Go ye into ALL the world, faith Christ, and preach the Gosp. l unto all nations.” And this promise of perpetuating the order of the Christian priesthood hath hitherto been verified by a regular succession of clergy, in all lands where the catholic church hath been duly planted; with us, more particularly, of this nation, ever since its first conversion: And O may the same divine mercy, which gave us such *teachers*, continue them to us, and our posterity, that our candlestick may never be removed, nor our teachers driven into corners any more!—Yea, come what will in any private or personal case; remove the Christian from his *teachers*, or his *teachers* from him; place him in the remotest part of the habitable earth; even there with his eye shall he see his teacher; for his eye is faith, and his teacher GOD. This promise is entailed on every sincere Christian, while he sojourns, and wherever he sojourns, upon earth: “They shall all be taught of God.”—And again, “Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”—Another inestimable privilege, peculiar to the Christian dispensation, is the perpetual guidance of the Holy Spirit; not only to teach us, by the outward ministry of the word, and faithful pastors, but constantly to attend and accompany us in every step of our way: Not only to lead

and direct us in right paths; but reduce us when we go astray. If we turn aside at any time out of the straight way which leadeth to life, to the right hand, or to the left, to either extreme, of over-much, or over-little, from following the holy Jesus, then shall our ears hear a word behind us, even the word of our divine guardian and monitor, calling us to return; and pointing out our path, and saying to our souls, *This is the way, walk ye in it.*—This is that blessed fellowship and communion of the Holy Ghost, which the Gospel intitles to, which the Gospel alone confers, and so often triumphs in<sup>u</sup>.—And, what is still more, so great shall be our hatred against sin, as not only to forsake and renounce all that the world idolizes and admires, but to detest all its pomps, pleasures, and profits, which are the occasions of sin; yea, to despise them as empty vanities, dung and drofs, in comparison of Christ Jesus our Lord. *The silver covering, the golden ornaments*<sup>x</sup>, of these idols, shall be taken off; and their intrinsic rotteness, corruption, and filth, stand open and naked to the eye of faith, which sees through all their most plausible disguises. *Then* (as it follows) shall be give the rain of thy seed<sup>y</sup>, &c. *Then*, and not till then, when the heart is brought to a thorough contempt of all earthly things, shall our God pour down, like showers of the former rain on the seed that is sown, the fructifying graces of his Holy Spirit.—The church is a spacious and fruitful field, full of all manner of store, producing not only plenty of grain, of every useful kind, but abounding with herbage and grass:—Corn for the garner, to be stored up for future use; grass for immediate food; plenteous harvests and large pastures, of divine gifts and graces, to feed our souls here, and feast them hereafter.—By the cattle we may understand the laity, the sheep of Christ's flock; by the

<sup>u</sup> See also Cor. xiii. 14. Phil. ii. 1. <sup>v</sup> John ii. 20. John xvi. 13, 14, 15. <sup>x</sup> Isa. xxx. 22. <sup>y</sup> Verse 23.

*oxen and young asses*, the clergy, who are employed in this spiritual husbandry, to cultivate and *ear the ground* of our hearts. And in these [the clergy] are required greater degrees of sanctity; their food must be *clean provender*; that is, a life and conversation well cleared from all chaff of vice and error, well *winnowed with the shovel and the fan*.—By the *shovel* seems to be meant that separation of them from the common heap or body of the people, for the office of the ministry: The *fan* may signify to us the breath or inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which consecrates their persons to this holy function, and should purify them from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, from the very concerns, as well as defilements, of all secular affairs (See the ordination service.)—By the *high mountains* and *high hills* (ver. 25.) may be understood, either particular churches and congregations of Christians, or more particularly any just or holy men. By *rivers* and *streams of water*, on the summits and tops of these hills (which is contrary to the common course of nature) is aptly represented the divine and supernatural effect of that grace; that it is as extraordinary, and above the operations of mere nature, or the apprehension of mere human reason, as the flowing of *rivers over mountains and hills*.—And this, it is said, shall be *in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall*. The progress and triumphant success of the Gospel is often charactered to us, in the prophetic language, by conquest and slaughter of enemies; besieging and taking of fortresses and strong cities; casting down towers, &c.—Those enemies are the adversaries of the church, and all that oppose the spiritual empire of Christ.—These *towers* (according to St. Jerom) may also denote that pride of the heart, and every vain imagination, which, like the tower of *Babel*, lifts itself up against heaven. This, as the chief bar and opposition to the Christian life, shall utterly *fall* and be brought down by the Gospel; and especially by that astonishing

astonishing condescension, and amazing humility, of a crucified God. How great was that *slaughter* of pride! How humbling to man was that stupendous instance of divine humility and love, which appeared in the death of Christ, and still appears to the believing soul, in the sacred memorials of that death, that *great slaughter*, of our ever-blessed Redeemer!

*N. B.* In the day of the great *slaughter*, may also signify the times of persecution; and, by the *falling of the towers*, be meant the martyrdom of the bishops, and heads of the church; whose province being both to defend, and take the oversight<sup>2</sup> of her, may properly be called her watch-towers.

26. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

Light is the emblem of joy and happiness; accordingly happy times are often expressed by bright and pleasant days; but, in the spiritual sense, may mean the extraordinary increase of that heavenly light, which shall come by the Gospel; in which respect Christ is called, “The light of the world; the sun of righte-

“ousness, that bringeth life and immortality to light; “and in whose light we all see light.” And that this is to be understood, is the effect of Christ’s coming, appears from what immediately follows,—that this shall be, when the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound; that is, when, or his first coming, he shall die for our sins, and raise again for our justification; but much more at his second coming shall this prophecy be verified, when the light of the moon, that is, the church,

<sup>2</sup> Take the overseer.] So our church translates the Greek word which St. John uses, in John v. 2. And St. Paul styles them ἐπιτρόπους, a word signifying overseers, and from which our English word *bishop* is derived

shall be *as the light of the sun*; i. e. shall put on the glory of Christ, and be cloathed with the sun (as St. John speaks, *Rev.* xii. 1.) Then will be the ultimate completion of that other prophecy, “ Arise, shine; “ for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD “ is risen upon thee.”—Then, and not fully till then, will our Lord *bind up the breach of his people*, and for ever *heal the stroke of their wound*: Not only put an end to their sufferings, but their sins; save them from sin itself, as well as cure its wounds; that so sin no more may have dominion over us.—O happy Advent! O blessed cure! Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus! Come and save us!

27. *Behold, the Name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire.*

28. *And his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err.*

heaven, which, in *Luke* ix. 12. is called a far country. It imports also the unexpectedness of his appearance at the last day, which wicked or careless Christians had put far from them.—And, as his coming, so the effect of his coming is also two-fold; to destroy sin, or else the sinner.—The Gospel is a fiery law to all, *burning with anger, full of indignation,*

Observe here, how the prophet, in the spirit of vision, foresees the last and most glorious Advent of Christ! And so doth every believing soul, in the spirit of faith; BEHOLD, *the Name of the Lord cometh!*—Cometh in mercy to redeem, cometh in glory to judge! Christ is called *the Name of the LORD*, to express his divinity, and supreme power over all flesh, to punish or reward (See *John* xvii. 2.) He is said to *come from far* to denote his coming from

<sup>2</sup> *Ifa.* lxi. 1.

and a *devouring fire*, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men whatsoever, to punish and consume the wicked; but purifying and refining the humble and the good. In like manner, and to the same ends, the Gospel is also an *overflowing stream*, to cleanse the obedient heart; to overwhelm and destroy the stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, who resist it.—It is likewise a *sieve, to sift the nations*; purging the good corn, and scattering the chaff:—Is a *bridle*, to rule and direct his faithful servants, but to curb and restrain the obstinate and perverse: Yea, *causing* all such to err more and more from the way of truth, who refuse to obey it. And no punishment in this life can be so severe as judicial error. To be given up to the slavery of our own lusts, and to be led captive of the devil at his will, is both the effect and penalty of not obeying the truth.

*29. Ye shall have a song as in the night, when an holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Mighty one<sup>b</sup> of Israel.*

*30. And the L O R D shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.*

*Ye shall have, &c.* That is, ye, my people.—While his just vengeance pursues his enemies (as it did, in so remarkable a manner, the *Affyrian*, i. e. *Senacherib*, here immediately prophesied against; as it also did afterwards the incredulous *Jews*, the *Roman* powers, who smote the church with the *rod* of persecution) yea, my people, shall enjoy that peace, which the world can neither give nor take away; that peace of God which passeth all understanding; yea, the joy of the Holy Ghost shed

<sup>b</sup> *Heb.* The Rock:

abroad

31. *For through the voice  
of the LORD shall the Af-  
syrian be beaten down,  
which smote with a rod.*

abroad in the heart, which will give you songs in the night (*Job xxxv. 10.*) For he is the comforter, and God of peace and consolation.

The coming of Christ to judgment is often compared to a coming in the night<sup>c</sup>, to signify the suddenness of it, especially to all that are unprepared; to them it will come, not only with terror and surprise, *but with the flame of a devouring fire with, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones*: But to the righteous, how sudden soever it come, it will prove as a solemn, but joyful, festival; even like those holy solemnities, which the devout *Israelites* proclaimed overnight, with cheerful songs, and loud rejoicings, when they were preparing to ascend to *Jerusalem*, to worship at the temple.—A most lively emblem of the joy, and likewise of the manner, in which the saints shall assemble themselves together, at the last day, to meet their Judge and Saviour in the clouds.—And this will be their song (O may we be worthy to join therein!)

“ *O sing unto the LORD a new song, sing unto the Lord all the earth, &c. For he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with this truth.*” Ps. xcvi.

32. *And in every place where the grounded<sup>d</sup> staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps:*

This verse is very obscure and variously expounded, hardly one expositor agreeing with another; so that it is difficult to understand or explain it, so as to recon-

<sup>c</sup> *Mat. xxv. Rev. xvi. 15. Luke xii. 38.*

<sup>d</sup> *Grounded.]* The Hebrew *Mosadha*, by Junius and Tremellius, is rendered *fundatissima*, and explained, *certissima ex Dei decreto immutabili, super quo fundata est.*—*Staff*, in the Hebrew, is *Masseb*, which is the same word as in *Gen. xlviij.* yet is there render'd *bed*. But the LXX there, and St. Paul, *Heb. xi. 21.* have translated it *ἔβαθος, a staff.* See *Hammond* on *Heb. xi.*

*and in battles of shaking* cile the sense to what goes  
will be fight with it. before, and follows after. But

as we have hitherto, with the church, accommodated the accomplishment of this prophecy to the Gospel-times, no sense seems better to fit this difficult passage, than if, by the *grounded staff* we understand the Cross of Christ. It is generally allowed, that the staff which *Jacob* leaned upon, when he blessed the sons of *Joseph*, just before his death, was a figure of that cross, on which the true *Jacob* was to suffer, and whereon it is expressly said he bowed himself; and, by that action, most certainly “blessed us, in “turning away every one of us from our sins<sup>e</sup>:” Yea, blessed us younger, before the elder (as *Jacob*, in the spirit of prophecy, did the sons of *Joseph*) even us Gentiles, before his antient people.—In consequence of this sense, the word *grounded* may well be interpreted of the eternal and immutable decree of God; so that the meaning will be this: That, by the eternal purpose of God, Christ was destined to suffer on the cross, and for this reason is called “the “Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.” This, our prophet saith, *the Lord shall lay upon him*, but in the same sense, and to the same end, as he elsewhere speaks, “he laid on him the iniquities of “us all<sup>g</sup>.”—This, to him indeed, was a grievous and heavy burden (for what can be heavier than the sins of the whole world?) This made him a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief, yea, made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; but to us, the redeemed of the Lord, *it shall be with tabrets and harps*. His sorrows became our joy; he grieved and suffered, that we might rejoice.—’Tis true indeed, nay, we know and feel, that the cross is also laid on the disciples of Christ; but it is laid as it was upon *Simon of Cyrene*, in the way only, and until Christ take it from them, and bear it for them. By.

<sup>e</sup> John xix. 30.

<sup>f</sup> Acts iii. 26.

<sup>g</sup> Isa. liii.

on his enemies it shall be laid, until they expiate and satisfy for their own sins, which can never be; and therefore it will rest upon them for ever and ever.—For another great use and design of the cross is, to conquer and subdue all the enemies of God; therefore it is added, *In battles of shaking will be fight with it.* And this may not only presignify the general and universal success of the cross of Christ, in the conversion of all those who submit thereto, and the final destruction of all who reject or oppose it; but seems to have a particular and more especial view to that eminent and extraordinary instance of its victory and triumph over the heathen powers, which appeared to Constantine<sup>h</sup>, the first Christian emperor, when the figure of the cross was seen in the air, with these words, *IN THIS OVERCOME.*—By this sign was he himself subdued to the faith of Christ; by this were discomfited his and the church's enemies; so that it was signally verified, what is here foretold, *In battles of shaking will be FIGHT with it.* It is by the cross also that we fight and subdue the enemies of our souls, and are more than conquerors through him who strengtheneth us.—This is the banner we are listed to fight under; this is our weapon, this both our pledge and trophy of victory. And when, at the last day, we shall see it in the air (as Constantine did) see this sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds, then may we lift up our heads with joy, and be assured that our redemption draweth nigh; for then we shall obtain a full, a complete, and eternal victory over all our enemies.

Hell is called *Tophet*, from  
33. For *Tophet* is or- a place of that name in the  
dained of old<sup>i</sup>: yea, for the valley

<sup>h</sup> *Constantine.*] See the history in *Eusebius.* The inscription on the sign of the cross, which he saw in the air, was εν τοτε νίκη, *By this overcome.*

<sup>i</sup> *Of old.*] The Hebrew *Meethmol* signifies *ab heri, from yesterday.* This, with respect to God, means, *before the world* ....; i.e. from

*king it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.*

valley of the son of *Hinnom*, where the idolatrous Jews were wont to burn their children to *Moloch*.—That it stands here for hell, appears most likely, from the connexion it hath with the preceding verse. And by the *king*, in this place (for whom it is said to be prepared) is to be meant Christ. This seems most coherent with what is said of him in the foregoing verse, he being that *king* to whom all judgment is committed; and therefore *for him* (that is, for his use, and for execution of his sentence on the wicked,) *Tophet*, or hell, hath been *prepared of old*, before the world was.

from eternity. For since the world began, all time to God is but as a day: What therefore is called *yesterday*, must be before time was. Others interpret it *jam ante*, and then it imports the same, when joined with *ordained*, as *preordained*, or *fore-appointed*.

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## The Fourth Sunday in ADVENT.

The Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxii.

*The nature and effects of Christ's kingdom; conveying blessings to his faithful servants, those who repent, and believe the Gospel; but desolation and destruction to such as neglect or despise it.*

1. **B**ehold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

**T**HIS is evidently a prophecy of the coming of Christ, and the happy consequences of his kingdom, where-ever it shall obtain its full effect. If we take the literal version of the original [which is plainly this,—“A king shall reign unto righteousness, and princes shall rule unto judgment.”] we shall then more clearly see the true nature and design of his kingdom, and of the power of those, who are the princes and rulers thereof; namely, that it is to establish *righteousness* and true piety in the world. So that his reign is plainly distinguished from that of all other kings. Their common aim is to extend their power, wealth, conquest, glory, upon earth; his kingdom, though in the world, is not of the world: Its sole end is to conquer vice, ignorance, and error; to extend the dominion of truth and virtue; in a word, to found an empire in the hearts and consciences of mankind, which no other king was ever equal to, or ever un-

dertook to do. Some may be said to have reigned in righteousness, and ruled in judgment, and have thereby acquired the character of just and virtuous princes; but none of them could ever propagate their virtues to others, or communicate their own *righteousness* to their subjects. No king was ever able to do this, but that King only, who came from Heaven<sup>a</sup>, whose Advent the prophet here foreshews, and our church at this time commemorates. He alone is both a righteous King, and a King of righteousness, the true *Melchizedek*: Not only in himself, or in his kingdom, righteous; but in us, his people, he is the author and sole principle of all *righteousness*.—He reigneth *unto* it, that is, to this very end and purpose. And if there be any title of honour, which we may presume to be the object of this great King's ambition, more than any other, it is that whereby he stiles himself, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and, The KING OF SAINTS. None but such are his people; none but such does he admit to be his subjects. And the seat of his empire is the soul, not the body, of man, as he assures us (*Luke xvii. 21.*) “The kingdom of heaven is within you.”—To conclude, the church is the kingdom of Christ, even the kingdom of heaven upon earth. He is the King that *reigns* here; the clergy (especially of the higher order, whom he hath made princes in all lands<sup>b</sup>) are the officers and rulers under him.—As his power and government is spiritual, so is theirs; as he *reigns*, to propagate and establish righteousness and true holiness in the earth, so should they *rule*, and exercise their sacred office and authority, to promote the same divine ends.

<sup>a</sup> The like sentiment I find in the great *Athanasius*, de incarnat, Verbi Dei, p. 462. Ἐξ ἑραν̄ καλαβίθηκεν ἐπὶ τὸν ἀχράντον δικαιοσύνην παρ' ἵαντας δωρέμενος Λόγος. The Word descended from Heaven, who from himself bestows that righteousness, which is pure and unmixed.

<sup>b</sup> Psalm xiv.

2. *And a man shall be as an biding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

*A man.]* That is, the man *Jesus*, even the human nature of Christ, who often styles himself the son of man, to intimate this great benefit to us. By assuming our flesh, and becoming *man*, he became our shelter from

the divine wrath; our refuge from all danger; our comfort in all trouble; our Saviour in all distress.—On the contrary, we may from hence understand, what is meant by that threatening saying of his, ch. xlvii.

3. “I will not meet thee as a man,” being as much as to say, “I will not meet thee as a Saviour:”—As the man *Jesus*, to save and redeem; but as God, to judge and punish.

3. *And the eyes of them that see, shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear, shall bearken.*

*The eyes of them that see,* that is of those who believe in him. Faith is the eye of the soul, the only eye that can see Christ. As some are said to have eyes

and see not; ears and hear not; so there is also a seeing eye, and an hearing ear; that is, a super-added faculty, a divine gift of discerning spiritual things; and “it is the Lord, who hath made even “both of them.” The natural eye is common to all men; the spiritual sight and hearing are peculiar to the Christian, and the sole gift of grace, through him who is both the life and the light of men.—*Shall not be dim;* or rather, according to the *Hebrew*<sup>a</sup>, *shall not be deceived.*—That is, the appearance of God in the flesh shall be no illusion, no phantasm, according to the antient heresy of the *Docetæ*<sup>c</sup>; nor merely

<sup>c</sup> *Prov. xx. 12.*

<sup>a</sup> *Lo misbhenu, Non hallucinabuntur,* shall not be deluded.

<sup>b</sup> *Docetæ*, i. e. *Seemers*, so called, because they held only a *seeming*, not a real, appearance of Christ in the flesh.

figurative, according to the notion of some modern heretics; but according to reality and truth. So that as it was foretold, that it should be said, “Behold your God,” so we find the apostles constantly bearing witness to this truth, that they had heard him with their ears, and seen him with their eyes; yea, to obviate all pretence and colour of objection, it is added, that “with their hands they handled the Word of life.” See *1 John i. 1, &c.* — It also agrees with the sense of that saying of our Lord’s, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, “and he shall have more abundance<sup>f</sup>;” or, as St. Mark<sup>g</sup> expresses it, “Unto you that hear, shall “more be given.”

4. *The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the flammerers shall be ready to speak plainly<sup>h</sup>.*

*Rash*, or rather *hasty*, for so the Hebrew signifies, and means the ignorant and unlearned, such as were in general the first followers of Christ; so that what the Jews observed of his disci-

ples, that they were [*ἀγέραπτοι καὶ ιδιώται*] ignorant and unlearned men; and what they pleaded in defence of their own incredulity, saying [“Have “any of the Pharisees believed on him?”] instead of being an objection (had they considered this prophecy) was rather an argument of the truth of his doctrine, and a manifest proof that he was the *Messias*.—The miraculous power of the Spirit is here likewise foretold, which, in an instant wrought so wonderful a change in the first converts to Christianity, who, from plain, simple, illiterate men, became indued at once with such wisdom and *eloquence*, that none of their adversaries were able to gainsay or resist.—And such wisdom our Lord had promised to give them. *Luke xxi. 15,*

<sup>f</sup> *Mat. xiii. 12.*

<sup>g</sup> *Ch. iv. 24.*

<sup>h</sup> Or *elegantly*.

The

5. *The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.*

The literal version, which gives a clearer idea of the sense, is, *It shall not be said to the fool, Thou art liberal, &c.* that is, Christianity will

banish all that adulation, and fulsome compliment, which is too usual from the poor towards the rich and powerful.—The preachers and true disciples of the Gospel shall not court the favour of rich men, nor flatter the great, by extolling the *fool*, or wicked man, for his liberality, or the rich miser for his wealth; but rather, with an honest freedom, and unbiased sincerity, reprove and rebuke all sinners, of what rank or quality soever they be. Thus spake St. Peter before the council, with that boldness as made them marvel; thus also spake St. Stephen; and by this undaunted and holy rhetoric St. Paul the prisoner made his judge to tremble on the bench. O that the same spirit were now to be found amongst us!

6. *For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.*

7. *The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.*

8. *But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and*

The wisdom of Christian plain-dealing is here justified, shewing that fair speeches, and smooth words, will never avail to convert one that is of a *vile* and dishonest principle. Or if he doth pretend religion, and complies with the outward form, he is still no more of a Christian than he was before: He is but an *hypocrite* at best: Yea, most commonly such base spirits, instead of being reformed by religion, become more *vile*, oppressive, and cruel. So that our Lord's words prove generally

*by liberal things shall be generally true with respect to such men;* “Whosoever

“ hath not [common ho-

“ nour and honesty] from him shall be taken away  
“ even that which he seemed to have;”—even the very appearance of moral justice and conscience. So that Christianity in a corrupt heart, is like good food to a sick stomach ; makes a man worse than he was, and adds to his distemper. Whereas the good man, who, by a sincere repentance, has purged out of his heart the corruption that is in the world thro' lust, is improved daily in virtue and grace : His designs are ever just, and worthy of his profession ; and *by these shall he stand.* 'Tis by these things only that he seeks to support his character, and the interest of religion ; and by these honest means shall he establish both.

9. *Rise up, ye women that are at ease ; hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech.*

10. *Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.*

11. *Tremble, ye women that are at ease : be troubled, ye careless ones : strip ye and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.*

12. *They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.*

“ comforted.” In the world ye [that are my disciples] shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer,

Thus far have we seen the heavenly nature, and the salutary effects, of Christ's kingdom. But there is a necessary premonition, and most useful caution, which our lesson here gives us, that altho' every Advent of Christ, by which he cometh to us in this life, be intended and designed as blessings to his people, yet all shall be preceded by mourning and sorrow.—This is the order our Lord has established, and warns us to expect :—“Blessed are they  
“ that mourn ; for they (and  
“ they only who have so  
“ mourned first) shall be

"clear, &c." It is also said of Christ himself, "He went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain: He entered not into his glory before he was crucified: So our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to eternal life, is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death, and dwell with him in everlasting life."—All this is typified to us, in our lesson, by the *troubles*, and *trembling*, and *lamentation*, which the careless women of those times, and in general all careless and effeminate persons, who place their happiness in ease, and the pleasures of this life, are here called unto.

Great was the desolation by famine, and the calamities of war, which the invasion of *Senacherib* should occasion (as is foretold, and soon after came to pass) before that wonderful deliverance was to happen by the hand of the angel. In like manner great were the troubles, and grievous the calamities, in the *Maccabean* times, before the coming of the *Messiah* to save and redeem his people. Not to mention the sore bondage of *Egypt*, before they were delivered from thence by the hand of *Moses*.—All which is to shew us, that this is the general order in the spiritual life, sorrow first, and then joy; that tribulation must make way for comfort; the cross for the crown. Christ tells us himself, he came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword<sup>k</sup>: this sword must destroy the power of sin in the heart, before his peace can find admittance there.

By this general proceeding of Divine Providence, we are also taught, not only to submit to all afflicting dispensations with patience, but even to receive them with joy, as the sure way and only means to happiness. They are like the Baptist with regard to Christ, "a voice in the wilderness" [of this world] crying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at

<sup>i</sup> Lit. off. for the sick.

<sup>k</sup> Mat. x. 34.

“ hand :—“ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths strait.” These forerunners of Christ, though clad in *sackcloth*, and the garment of sorrow, yet brings us glad tidings ; the glad tidings of peace and salvation : “ For, if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him.”

31. *Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, yea, upon all houses of joy in the joyous city :*

14. *Because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude of the city shall be left, the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.*

But man is ever seeking felicity in this miserable world, where it has no place. Ever since his expulsion out of paradise he is still dreaming of *Elysian* fields, and hunting after the garden of pleasure, or building up *forts* and *towers* towards heaven. But all his schemes of happiness here below are imaginary and vain. *Upon his land*, and particularly on the land of God’s *people*,

shall come up *briers and thorns*. This curse, as entailed on the earth, ever since our fall, is common to all the sons of *Adam*; but affects none more generally than the Christian, the true *people* of God. Their worldly enjoyments are more embittered to them than any others : Their earthly comforts are allayed with a larger mixture of crosses and troubles, which, like *thorns* and *briers* annoy their quiet, and deny them rest. Their *palaces* and *towers*, i. e. both the conveniences and securities of this mortal life, they shall be driven from, and forced to forsake, before they can attain to any solid peace or safety. Yea, so forsake, as never to repair to them again ; never to repair to them as to *SURE resting-places*, as to helps to be depended upon, for ease or defence.—They may be the *joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks* ; that is, they may afford a kind of present satisfaction to carnal men, who have no higher relish of happiness than the beasts that perish ; but they are below the dignity,

dignity, and dangerous to the virtue of a Christian soul. To remove such comforts, or to embitter their taste, is therefore a kind discipline of our heavenly Father, intended to wean us from the world, and oblige us to seek for happiness in a better land than this; even in that place where alone it is to be found:—And he would be less kind, were he less severe.

15. *Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

That is, until the coming of the *Messiah*,; for so this prophecy hath been literally fulfilled (as was remarked before,) in the many and continued calamities and desolations of the *Jewish nation*, under the *Babylonians*,

*Perians, Greeks, and Romans.* But his coming, and especially his pouring forth his Spirit upon his church *from on high* (i. e. after his ascension) quite changed the face of things. Yea, his very first appearance in the flesh was attended with peace upon earth; not only a peace to his own people, but a general peace throughout the whole world. So that, according to the prophecy, “They beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.” Yea, the arts of peace and agriculture were so improved, that the very *wilderness became a fruitful field*. All nature seemed to revive, to flourish, and rejoice. But how much more perfect was this state of tranquillity and peace, to those who received this Prince of peace! To them he gave a power superior to all the privileges, nobility, or grandeur, of the mightiest monarchs upon earth, even to be born again,—not of blood, or the will of the flesh, but of GOD; to become the children of the Most High; to be heirs of heaven, and coheirs with himself of his own kingdom of glory:—Yea, he sent down heaven itself into their souls, when he *poured down his Spirit upon them from on high*; shed abroad in their hearts

hearts a peace,—not such as the world giveth,—a love, that turned every sorrow into comfort; yea, pain and death itself, into joy unspeakable, and full of glory; converting the *barren wilderness* of our nature, by the seed of his word, and operative faith, into a *fruitful field* of heavenly graces, and good works:—So *fruitful*, that, in comparison thererof, those fields, which before went for fertile and rich, the *fields* of learning and philosophy among the heathen, or even the more excellent wisdom and virtues of God's own people, the *Jews*, would be *counted* but as a desert, or uncultivated *forest*, or even as dross and dung, as St. *Paul* calls them.

16. *Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.*

Where-ever the Christian religion prevails, and has its full effect, it restores man, not only to himself, but to paradise again.—To a soul

that is imdued with perfect love, and a full assurance of faith in Christ, every dispensation of providence, and all the various scenes of life, are but so many different occasions of displaying his several graces and virtues.—In the *wilderness*—of trouble and adversity, his *judgment* and good principles shall not forsake, but *dwell* with him, as a bosom-friend, and faithful counsellor.—In the *fruitful field*—of prosperity, his *righteousness* and integrity shall not be corrupted by any worldly enjoyments of ease and plenty.

This prophecy was also literally verified in the early ages of Christianity, when, not only the courts of kings, and their armies abounded with holy men, but the very deserts were peopled with saints, and resounded with hymns and praises to Christ, according to that other prophecy, “The mountains and “hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees “of the field shall clap their hands.” Nay, so remarkable was the change, that it might well be said, “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and “instead

“ instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree ;  
 “ and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an ever-  
 “ lasting sign [of the power of the Lord Jesus, and  
 “ the efficacy of his religion] that shall not be cut  
 “ off.” See ch. lv. ver. 12, 13.—But, alas! the pi-  
 ety of those primitive times is a lasting monument of  
 our want of zeal !

17. *And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*

*Peace is the work, that is, the fruit and reward of righteousness.—“ All men, faith St. Augustin<sup>1</sup>, love peace; but, at the same time, they reject righteousness: They seek a good thing, yet obtain it not; because they seek it where it is not to be found.—Peace tells them, I am inseparable from righteousness; for righteousness and peace have kissed each other. If therefore ye love me, love justice, and with her shall ye find me: But think not ever to possess me, if ye remain enemies to her I love, and with whom I am so closely allied.”*

18. *And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.*

*My people,—both Jews and Gentiles, after their conversion to Christianity, shall dwell in a peaceable habitation; that is, shall enjoy true inward peace and security.*

Jew and Gentile, tho' before so averse and contrary to each other, were made one people, under one Head and Master JESUS CHRIST; having “ one body and one spirit, as they were called in one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, &c.” And, as brethren united in one family, had one house, the one holy catholic church, to dwell in: *A truly peaceable habitation,*

<sup>1</sup> In *Psal.* 1.

being the seat of love, a communion of saints;—*sure dwellings*, being founded of God on a rock, which the gates of hell shall never prevail against;—a *quiet resting-place*, because there reigns the Prince of peace; the Holy Spirit of love, and joy, and comfort, *rests* and abides there.—It is not then an outward, temporal peace, such as the world giveth, that is here promised; but that spiritual, internal peace of mind, which Christ calls his, and the world can neither give, nor take away.

19. *When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.*

But unbelievers (and, as such, remaining still under condemnation, and the sentence of death) shall be exposed to all the storms of divine justice;

while the faithful are under covert in *sure dwellings*, and a *quiet resting-place*.—As there is no mercy, so there is no safety, but in the church of Christ; no shelter from the *hail* of God's vengeance, but here.—Observe we the difference between the people of God, and those who are not yet added to the church, or such as have forsaken it: How general soever the tempest of his judgments may be, very signal is the distinction which is made betwixt them. These, like men or cattle in a *forest*, or like the *Egyptians* in the open field, during the shower of hail, have no fence, no refuge, to screen them from the violence of the storm: But the others, like the *Israelites* in *Goshen*, or as *Noah* and his family in the ark, are secured from the shower, as it were, in a tight and well built house.—They hear the storm, but feel it not. This prophecy was literally fulfilled at the taking of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*: The *Jews* were taken and destroyed; but the Christians escaped to *Pella*, so that not one of them perished in the ruin of that city. That accomplishment was indeed a visible proof of God's justice and truth; but the spiritual meaning, as we have above explained it, is a more eminent instance of his goodness;

ness; and as this more particularly concerns our souls, it was doubtless the primary sense of our church in her choice of this lesson, and chiefly deserves our meditation, as we are now entering on the ensuing holy and joyful season.

20. *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.*

This seems well inter-  
preted by some, as an ec-  
phonema, or an exclama-  
tion of the prophet, reflect-  
ing how unsuccessful his  
own labours were like to

prove, in preaching to the obstinate Jews only; and tacitly complaining of his unhappiness, who *sowed* his seed on such dry and barren ground: And foreseeing, by the Spirit, the much greater success of the Gospel-ministers, who were permitted to *sow* their seed *beside all waters*; i. e. where-ever they judged the people disposed and fit to receive their doctrine; and that too without distinction of Jew or Gentile, as is implied in the next words, of *leading forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass*. This seems to be a proverbial saying, either taken from, or alluding to, that precept of Moses, Deut. xxii. 10. where the Jews are forbidden to *plow with an ox and an ass together*. The mystical meaning whereof is this, That the Jews *should* have no commerce or communication with the Heathens.—But the prophet pronounces those teachers of the Gospel happy, who should not be so restrained, nor confined to preach to Jews only, but be at liberty to lay aside all distinctions, and to gather a church out of either Jews or Gentiles, as they found them disposed to receive the Gospel.—Referable to this is what our Saviour said to his disciples, John iv. 37, 38. “Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth: I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured [to wit, the prophets, &c.] and ye are entered into their labours.”—And if the preachers were happy, how much more happy ought we Gentiles

to

to esteem our estate, to whom they were sent to preach the Gospel, and to publish the glad tidings of peace and salvation ! We, especially, of these *British* islands, who, at the time of this prophecy, were not only in gross darkness, but the most remote of any from the region of light, yea, from the rest of the then known world<sup>m</sup>; but "are now made nigh, who were some-time afar off; who are now made the people of "God, who were not a people." Yea, are blessed through their preaching, and a free enjoyment of the use of the holy Scriptures; with far greater light, not only than the once favourite people of God, but than any parts of *Christendom* besides. So that we may well say of ourselves, "The people that walked in "darkness, have seen a great light; we that dwelt "in the land of the shadow of death, upon us hath "the light shined." We are now the region of light; not indeed the only catholic church (as the *Roman* vainly boasts herself to be) but the purest part of all the Christian church on earth.—Our wilderness is indeed become a *fruitful field*, while *the fruitful field is counted for a forest*.—A blessing this, I cannot reflect on, without tears of joy!—But O ! when we loook on the little, yea, the bad use, which too, too many amongst us make of this glorious privilege, this clear sun-shine of the Gospel, how that the far greater numbers love darkness rather than light ; yea, hate and blaspheme the light, because their deeds are evil; have we not just cause to fear, that God will remove his candlestick, and consign our land again to that thick darkness, and shadow of death, from which our forefathers had been delivered?—Nevertheless, of the small remnant that are left, *blessed still are they*, and only they, *who sow their seed beside all waters*; for it is by water that we are saved, *if*, Beside the water of baptism, and laver

<sup>m</sup> So the antients thought; which made *Virgil* say,  
*Et penitus toto divisus orbe Britanno.*

of regeneration; for thereby is obtained an entrance into the kingdom of heaven: *2dly*, Beside the fountain of life, thro' faith in *Jesus*: *3dly*, The streams of grace, flowing from the Holy Spirit: *4thly*, The wells of salvation in the holy Gospel: *5thly*, The waters of penitential tears, for sin and uncleanness: And, *6thly*, The waters of comfort, in the sweet exercise of an holy life, and heavenly communications.

St. *John*, as our Gospel for this day relates, baptized at *Bethabara beyond Jordan*; a place where *there was much water*; and which, we are told, was the place where the *Israelites* had formerly passed over, into the land of *Canaan*. By this was signified to all that would enter into the heavenly *Canaan*, that our passage thither is still through *water*; that every Christian must, in this respect, be a *Moses*<sup>n</sup>, a water-born. By this we are planted in the church here; and, by a due use of the other waters of life, as above-recited, will be ensured to us an inheritance with the saints in glory.

<sup>n</sup> The name of *Moses* signifies, *drawn out of the water*; the daughter of *Pharaoh* gives that reason for so naming of him; "She called his name *Moses*; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water." *Exod. ii. 10.* And the author of the poem which goes under the name of *Orpheus*, alluding to this sense of his name, calls him, *Ὕδρογένης*, i. e. *Water-born*.

The NATIVITY of our LORD,  
or, the Birth-day of CHRIST, com-  
monly called CHRISTMAS-DAY.

P R E F A C E.

**W**HOEVER observes, with any attention, the frame and tenour of the office which the church hath compiled for this day, will be convinced, that her main design is to instruct all her children in the proper and peculiar nature, as well as dignity, of CHRIST's person; and especially in the belief of his real and essential Divinity: For after she has, by a solemn appointment of the four preceding Sundays, been preparing our hearts for a worthy reception of our Lord, she now more expressly informs us, in her lessons, her epistle and gospel, her psalms, and her collect, that this Lord JESUS CHRIST, whose Advent we have been expecting, and who, as at this time, took our nature upon him, and was born of a pure virgin, was not only the promised and peculiar "seed of the woman"<sup>a</sup>, but the true Emmanuel, God with us, or, GOD as well as MAN. That he was "the <sup>b</sup>Son of God, the <sup>c</sup>Word of God," who was from eternity "with God, and was GOD;" yes, "the <sup>d</sup>Mighty GOD." Not only a Saviour, born in the city, and of the lineage of David, but "Christ the LORD," as the very angels call him; even "GOD our Saviour," as the apostle styles him;

<sup>a</sup> Compare Isa. vii. 14. with Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>b</sup>C. <sup>c</sup>John i. 1.

<sup>d</sup>Tit. ii. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

<sup>e</sup> Luke ii. 11.

him; “the <sup>g</sup> Creator of heaven and earth,” as the Psalmist and Evangelist declare him; “the [church’s] “<sup>h</sup> Lord GOD,” whom she is expressly commanded to worship; whose absolute and eternal Godhead, as well as true and real Manhood, she therefore confesses in her Athanasian creed; and in her collect, actually and as required, worships and adores, as “One with the Father “and the Holy Ghost, ever One GOD world without “end.”—And to this prayer, these confessions, let all the people say, Amen. Let all the members, especially of this our excellent and truly orthodox church, contend earnestly for this faith, which was once delivered to the saints, and which she still retains and teaches: Yea, let us encourage and exhort one another in those words of St. Peter, “Seeing therefore, beloved, ye know these things “before, beware lest ye ALSO, being led away with the “error of the WICKED; fall from your own stedfastness; “but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord “and Saviour JESUS CHRIST<sup>i</sup>.”—To which, in concert with this holy apostle, and all true believers, let us add that hearty, and undoubtedly primitive doxology, “To “him<sup>k</sup> [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ] “be “glory both now and for ever.” Amen.

### First Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. ix. to Verse 8.

**I.** *N*Evertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the

**T**HE foregoing chapter concludes with an angry and severe prophecy against the reprobate and unbelieving Jews: But whereas with threatenings of judgment are generally intermixed the promises of mercy;

<sup>g</sup> Ps. xix. <sup>i</sup> John i. 3.  
<sup>k</sup> Verse 18.

<sup>h</sup> Ps. xlvi. <sup>i</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 17.

*way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*

this prophecy is addressed to the church and faithful servants of God, to comfort and support them under the affliction that was to befall them.—And what greater comfort, what surer mercies, could there be, than a confirmation of the great promise made to the fathers, of the birth and kingdom of Christ the Saviour of the world, who is the spring and sure pledge of all the divine mercies? Yea, that he should not only assuredly come to deliver them, but make those parts which had been most *afflicted*, the principal place of his residence and abode? Note, The histories here referred to, are in 2 Chron. xvi. 4. 2 Kings xv. 29. and 1 Chron. v. 26.

*2. The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

Observe we here the different dispensations of divine providence: The Jews, who had slighted and abused the means of grace, and contemned the light of God's holy word, were<sup>1</sup> driven out of their own land into heathen

<sup>1</sup>*Driven out of their own land.*] This event was foretold in the preceding chapter, ver. 22. [They shall be driven to darkness;] and came to pass, when the ten tribes were carried away captives by Salmanezer (as the history is related, 2 Kings ch. xvii.) and the vacancy supplied by him with a colony of Gentiles, which, consisting of a mixed multitude from several countries, from thence gave occasion to that territory's being afterwards called by the Jews *Galilee*, and *Galilee of the nations*, or Gentiles [*γαλιλαια των εθνων*] from the Hebrew *Galal*, to roll; implying, by way of reproach, a mixed confused people, *rolling* from place to place, and unsettled; not fixed to any certain tribes, or uniform descent from a common ancestor, as the *Israelites*, and some other great nations, were; a distinction they valued themselves much upon—That *Galilee* bare a name of reproach among the *Jews*, appears frequently in the gospels. Christ and his disciples were, in contempt, called *Galileans*. The Christians also, for some time, were distinguished by that name: And this was the name by which the apostate

then countries, into a land of *darkness*; they were punished with a deprivation of those spiritual helps they had so much neglected or despised: But the *Gentiles*, who, upon the removal of the ten tribes, were by *Salmonezer* transferred and brought into the land of *Israel*, these, coming out of darkness, *saw a great light*: They had dwelt before in the *land of the shadow of death*, but now upon them did the *light shine*, as we read *2 Kings ch. xvii. ver. 28*. But, afterwards, how amply was this verified by our Lord's appearance in those parts, and making *himself* the chief scene of his miracles; as prophesied and interpreted, *Mat. iv. v. 12*.

This event is also alluded to, when Israel the *Jews* and *Gentiles* upon the preaching of the gospel, the *Jews* for their incredulity, and *rejecting* the *light*, were themselves rejected, and cast out of the church, which is the true region of light; and the *Gentiles*, which believed, were admitted, as it were, into their room and possessions; and *saw a great light*, even Christ; who is indeed a light to lighten the *Gentiles*, as well as the glory of his people *Israel*.

*3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

*Thou hast multiplied the nation.]* If instead of the nation, we render it, *in this nation*, and understand it of the *Gentiles*, not the *Jews*, as some do, it will not only suit better with the context, both before and after, and

with the sense we take this prophecy in, but agree more literally with the Hebrew original; it noting to

apostate *Julian*, when wounded mortally by an arrow at the head of his army, blasphemed our Lord with his dying breath, *Vicisti, O Galilæe*, “*Thou hast got the better of me, O Galilean.*”

*In this nation.]* The Hebrew word *Haggi*, having the article demonstrative prefixed, is rather to be rendered *this*, than *the nation*. So *Tremellius* renders it, *hanc Gentem*, meaning *the Gentiles*.

us the vast number of converts among the Gentiles, upon the preaching of the gospel.

*And not increased the joy.]* So the original, as it lies in the context, is rightly rendered. But some interpreters prefer a different reading, which is found in the margin of the Hebrew Bible; because otherwise they suppose there would be a contradiction in the sense. But if we take the beginning of the verse in the sense above given, there seems no cause for any such alteration; but that we should rather retain our own translation; it agreeing also with other versions<sup>n</sup> of good authority; who render it, *Thou hast not magnified the joy*, and explain it, “yet hast not thou ‘bestowed a stable joy,’ meaning the uncertainty and instability of all human and worldly advantages. But others expound it in a sense still more agreeable to what we have followed; to wit, That the joy, which the Gentiles shall have on their conversion to Christianity, will be much abated by the rejection of the Jews. So St. Jerom, who explains it by the like effect it had upon St. Paul<sup>o</sup>, who, “sorrowed for his ‘kinsmen according to the flesh;’” by that prayer also of Christ, when he so ardently prayed, “Fa-“ ther, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; “that is to say, Let the Gentile be saved, without the “Jews destruction; But if not, thy will be done. “—Let me drink it, and suffer extremity of grief “for the rejection of my own people the Jews; if so “be a greater increase may come to thy kingdom, “by the addition of other nations.”—Thus com- ments St. Jerom. And this exposition corresponds well with what precedes, and what follows.

*They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest.]* The joy of Christians is not perfect and complete in this life; it is rather in hope than in fruition; rather future than present. ’Tis like the joy of the farmer, “who sows, as it were, in tears, but reaps in joy<sup>p</sup>. ”

<sup>n</sup> The Vulgate, and Junius and Tremellius.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. ix. 2.

<sup>p</sup> Psalm cxvii.

The plowing and cultivating his ground costs him much sweat and pains; but he is encouraged to proceed in his labour by the prospect and hope of a fruitful *harvest*.—In like manner the soldier (to which profession the Christian life bears a very near resemblance) arrives not at the desired division of the *spoil*, till he has quite conquered the enemy, and made his way to it thro' toil and bloodshed.

*Joy before thee.]* This denotes to be a religious joy, as being in the presence of God.—The joy of a good man is not worldly, but spiritual.—However sad and sorrowful his outward state and condition may appear to men, he still rejoices *before* God: So that this whole verse seems to comport with what our Lord saith of the outward effects of the gospel.—“ Think not that I am come to send peace upon earth, but a sword<sup>4</sup>,” &c. The end of his coming was not to procure for his followers a visible earthly peace, but peace with heaven; the peace of God; which, clashing with the false peace of the world, would often expose them to injurious treatment and persecutions. Wherefore, as he makes a plain distinction between these two kinds of peace [“ My peace give I unto you; not such as the world giveth,” &c.] so he likewise adds, “ In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world<sup>5</sup>.”

*The yoke of his burden,]*

4. *For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressors, as in the day of Midian.*

that is, his burdensome yoke. And a *staff* or *rod* being an ensign or emblem of authority, it comes to signify a stroke or blow inflicted by the hand of a superior. From

hence it is sometimes applyed to denote the oppressions of a tyrannical power; or of such conquerors as God makes use of as instruments of his vengeance. See

<sup>4</sup> Matt. x. 34.

<sup>5</sup> John xiv. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. xviii. 33.

chap. x. verse 5. ch. xxx. verse 31. *Breaking* this staff, is destroying the power and authority of such oppressor<sup>t</sup>.—But who is here meant by *his*? Whose burden, whose shoulder, are we to understand?—Nothing goes before, to which *his* can refer to. It is not, therefore, to be understood of Christ in his mediatorial capacity, as the representative of mankind; and undergoing in our stead the load and burden of sin? And then, as by *yoke* is meant the laying our guilt upon him, as a burden is laid upon a beast, so the staff of his shoulder, may intend the punishment of it, which was also laid upon him, as was emblematically shewn in the laying the cross upon his shoulders when going to his crucifixion. And we have before observed, that staff, in the prophetic language, is an apposite figure and representation of the cross<sup>u</sup>.

*Thou hast broken, &c.]* According to the above interpretation [*thou*] may be meant of, and addressed to, the Godhead or divine nature in Christ, and signify the same in effect as, that he should suffer as man, and satisfy as GOD: That the burden of sin and punishment was “laid upon him for the iniquities of us all;—that he hath borne our sins, and carried our infirmities;”<sup>v</sup>—But by the all-sufficient merit of the divine nature in Christ, and by his almighty power, that burden is broken off from us, and totally removed.—The *yoke*, or guilt of sin, is expiated by his death; the staff, or dominion of it, is conquered and subdued by his obedience, and the power of his resurrection.

*The rod of his oppressor, &c.]* Here *rod*, by amplification, is the same with staff; and by *oppressor*, in all probability, is to be understood the devil, that grand enemy of God and man. So St. Jerom expounds it. And then it means, that the staff, or guilt and obligation to punishment (to wit, sin and death),

<sup>t</sup> So Mr. Lowth expounds it. <sup>u</sup> See on the third Sunday in Advent, morning prayer; and fourth Sunday, morning prayer, on ver. 32. <sup>v</sup> Ch. lxxi.

was the *rod* of this *oppressor*; that is, was the sole cause of that advantage which the devil had gained over mankind, to oppress and tyrannize over them; and consequently, of those sufferings which he and his agents inflicted on our blessed Redeemer. The devil is just called *oppressor*, because he had no pretence of right or power over mankind to impose his service on them, and exact their obedience ; as it is to bring upon the holy and innocent JESUS such grievous and unmerited sufferings. For so Christ saith of himself, “The prince of this world cometh, ‘and he hath nothing in me.’” Nothing he can challenge as his own, either thro’ any taint of sin infused, or right of power, to render me obnoxious to punishment. From which words, and the real passion of Christ, a distinction necessarily follows, that he suffered for sin imputed; not inherent; for the guilt of others, not for his own.

*As in the day of Midian.]* This denotes the manner of the victory, which Christ obtained over the devil. It was not by numbers, nor by arms, nor by any worldly means, but by the sole power of God; even as Gideon overcame the *Midianites*: In whose victory, the earthen pitchers filled with light were types of the *Messiah*. The breaking of them represented his body broken for us; the light, which, on the breaking, blazed forth, and confounded the enemy, while it lighted Gideon, and his men, was as apt a representation of his Godhead, and divine power; and likewise of that glorious light, which, after his death and resurrection, enlightened the world, and confounded all his enemies.

5. *For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be*

We have here a further illustration of the manner and nature of Christ’s victory over our spiritual enemies. It is here distinguished from

\* *John* xiv. 30.

*with burning and fuel of fire.* all worldly battles fought amongst men. In these there

*is a confused noise of trumpets, shouting, clashing of arms, and garments rolled in blood;*

but Christ, the Captain of our salvation, conquers without the tumult and confusion of war, without violence, or shedding any *blood* but his own. His enemies and ours are sin and *Satan*. These shall be overcome by the baptism of Christ, namely (as the holy baptist styles it) with the holy Ghost, and with fire<sup>y</sup>; a sacred *fire*, which, by its illapse from heaven, shall not only overcome our corruptions, and every enemy that opposes Christ, but *burn them up*, as our elementary fire does its fuel, and utterly consume them. So that this place is parallel to that in chap. iv.

4. "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth  
" of the daughters of *Sion*, by the spirit of judgment,  
" and by the spirit of burning;" So that also of the  
Apostle, 2 Cor. x. ver. 3, 4, 5. "Though we walk in  
" the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the  
" weapons of our warfare are not carnal, &c."—Note  
also, this prophecy extends itself to the second coming  
of Christ (his first and second coming being often  
joined together in the prophets); and will receive its  
ultimate completion at the last day; "when he shall  
" come in flaming fire, taking vengeance of his ene-  
" mies."—But his first coming is the proper sub-  
ject of meditation for this day, the day of his NATIVIT Y.

6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his Name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting*

How great an enmity to Christ, how perverse a wresting of Scripture must it be, to apply this prophecy to any other than to Him! especially when we see it expressly applied to Him by an angel from heaven, at

<sup>y</sup> Luke iii. 16.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Thess. i. 7.

*Father, The Prince of the annunciation of his Peace.*

birth, *Luke i. 31, 32, 33.*

So that no Christian, no one

that retains any reverence for the authority of God's holy word, can, with any colour of reason, doubt, but that these words of our lesson must necessarily be meant of Him, even of that same Son, whose birth was prophesied of before, chap. vii. ver. 4. And the titles here given to this *child*, or son, cannot, with any propriety or sense, nay, without manifest blasphemy, be ascribed to any other person, than the blessed *Jesus*—*To us* [that is, to us men] *a child is born*; therefore Christ was man, the son of man, made of a woman, as all other men are, and of the seed of *David*, according to the flesh. All which plainly shews the human nature of Christ.—*Unto us a Son is given*: This as plainly shews his divinity: For altho' the term of *Child born to us*, be so general, as to extend its relation to a whole society or body of people (to wit, the *Jewish* nation in particular, and all mankind in general) yet the relation of *Son given*, must necessarily, and in all sense and reason, be limited only to the giver, namely, to God the father, whose Son he was.—And his giving of him *unto us*, and for us, is often spoken of in the New Testament, as the greatest instance of his love to mankind. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” *John iii. 16.* See also *Rom. viii. 32.* And by the following names and titles of this Son, it evidently appears, that he was more than man, even GOD as well as MAN.

*And the government shall be upon his shoulder;*] a phrase usual among the *Hebrews*, to set forth sovereign power. So, ver. 4. the *staff of his shoulder*; and chap. xxii. ver. 22. the *key upon his shoulder*; intimating both the great weight and honour of government.—The glorious, but uncommon, method of gaining the victory over his enemies, is before set forth,

forth, ver. 5. Here the reason or efficient cause is assigned of this extraordinary conquest and success; namely, the regal dignity, and divine authority, where-with this Son is invested. Hence the Father stiles him, My King; "I have set my King upon my holy "hill of *Sion*<sup>a</sup>." Hence he is called, "King of "kings, and Lord of lords<sup>b</sup>." And Christ himself hath declared this sovereign power and kingly office committed unto him, in those words; "All "power is given unto me both in heaven and "earth<sup>c</sup>." Which words are of the very same import with these of our prophet. See also *Coloff.* ch. i. ver. 16, 17, 18.

*And his Name shall be called;*] that is, he shall really and essentially be, what the following titles import; for in the *Hebrew* dialect, *Name* is often put for Thing; and [to be *called*] is the same in Scripture-phrase, as to be; it being rightly observed, by a learned expositor, that, "in holy writ, the Holy Ghost gives no names "as compliments, or mere and arbitrary titles of "honour; but the names express the essences of things<sup>d</sup>."—Thus we are to understand the name *Immanuel*, whereby the *Messiah* is called; to wit, that he really is what that name or form of expression signifies, even GOD with us; *i. e.* truly and properly GOD, and truly and properly man; perfect God, and perfect man; the divine and human nature being inseparably united in one person.—In the same manner likewise are we to understand that prophecy of Christ by *Jerem.* "This is the name whereby he "shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness<sup>e</sup>; " *i. e.* He really and essentially is, what the faithful shall *call* and confess him to be, *Jehovah* the LORD, by whom alone we obtained righteousness.

*Wonderful.]* So the angel that appeared to *Manoah*<sup>f</sup> (being no other than the *Logos*, or Son of God) tells

<sup>a</sup> *Psalm* ii.   <sup>b</sup> *Rev.* xix. 16:   <sup>c</sup> *Matt.* xxviii. 18.   <sup>d</sup> *Danubuz* on the *Revelations*.   <sup>e</sup> *Jerem.* Chap. xxiii. 6.   <sup>f</sup> *Judges* xiii. 18.

him, "His Name was Wonderful," as our margin more truly renders it. The name [*Peleb*] being the same in the original in both places, the person there appearing, and here spoken of, must be the same.—And well may he be called *Wonderful*; being wonderful in his works of creation, more wonderful in his work of redemption; wonderful for his miracles, and mighty acts of power; but most wonderful for his Incarnation (as at this time) and uniting the Godhead and manhood in his own person.

*Counsellor;*] another of his names, and well befitting him, who is Wisdom itself (*Prov. viii.*) even the Wisdom of God (*1 Cor. i. 24.*;) who "is made also unto us of God Wisdom and Righteousness," &c. ver. 30.—This title was also given him by one of the *Sibyls*, as *Lactantius* informs us. "The *Sibyl*, saith he, stiles him *Counsellor*, because invested with such wisdom and power by God the Father, who used his counsel, and his hands, in the creation of the world."

*The Mighty God.]* These are rather two names than one; viz. GOD, ALMIGHTY, as they are separately applied to Christ in the New Testament. In *Rom. ix. 5.* he is expressly called "GOD blessed for ever;" And *Rev. i. 8.* he is absolutely styled, "The Almighty."—But, granting one to be the epithet, and adjunct of the other, as our version hath it, still it proves the essential GODHEAD of Christ, being the very same title which is given to the GOD of *Israel* by our prophet, chap. x. 21. "The remnant of *Jacob* shall return to the mighty GOD."—It is also observable, that Christ is here called absolutely GOD, not as kings and potentates relatively and improperly called Gods; but here it is expressly said, his NAME shall be called GOD; which surely no mere man ever was or could be; [*vocabitur nomen ejus*] his very *name* shall be, The mighty GOD; i. e. essentially GOD, not titulary only; really and indeed, and not in style only, as sometimes men and angels

angels are. And we have before observed, that names, especially the names of God, do in Scripture express the nature, and essential property.

*The Everlasting Father.]* Well may the *Messiah* be called *Wonderful!*—Just now he was called a CHILD born, a SON given: Here he is styled *Everlasting FATHER*.—The Hebrew imports literally, *Father forth-on, or henceforth*; that is, without end; therefore is well rendered by some *Father of eternity*; not simply as he is eternal of himself, for that is the distinguishing character and property of the First Person in the God-head, to be the Eternal FATHER; but as Christ is the Father of eternity or immortality to us. For so he is affirmed to have “brought life and immortality “to light through the gospel<sup>g</sup>;” that he is “the author “of eternal salvation<sup>h</sup>:” And from hence it is, that, in Scripture, believers are called his seed.—Hence appears likewise the distinction necessary to be observed between the paternity of the Father, and of the Son. The First Person is from eternity a Father; as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; so that there was no time, or beginning of time, when he was not so; because there never was a time, or beginning of time, when Christ was not his Son.—But Christ commenced a *Father* to man, when man, who had a beginning, began to receive and believe in him: These he begot, and still begets, unto God. So that as Christ is the begotten, yea, the only-begotten Son of God, because of the very same nature and essence with the Father; so he becomes a *Father* to us, when we receive our new-birth, and become children to God in and through him; we, from that time, being one with him, and he with us.—Thus Christ is the Son of God FROM everlasting; and the *Everlasting Father* to us; i. e. TO everlasting.

The Septuagint, or Latin interpreters, render the words, *The Father of the age to come*. And the vulgar Latin follows that translation; which seeing the ori-

<sup>g</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. v. 9.

ginal will admit of, we may not refuse a particular regard thereto, because, in all probability, it is from the authority of that *Greek* version, which was extant in our Saviour's time, that the state of the gospel, or kingdom of the *Messiah*, is so often called in the New Testament, "the age or world to come." See *Mat.* xii. ver. 32. *Heb.* ii. 5. and chap. vi. 5.—This may also serve to confirm what hath been above observed.

*The Prince of Peace.]* This name, in an eminent manner, belongs to Christ, as he is the sole mediator between God and man; as he makes *peace*, and is our *peace*; creates it, and disposes of it (as a magnificent *prince* does his royal bounty) to all such as are objects of his favour. So we read, when, taking leave of his mournful disciples, he comforted them with these words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you"<sup>1</sup>—He was also the true antitype of *Solomon*, with regard even to an external *peace*, or cessation from wars; there being, at the time of his birth (even in the literal sense of the angels song, "Peace on earth"), a general peace all over the known world. *Augustus Cesar* then reigning, the temple of *Janus* was shut up, and all the earth enjoyed a profound peace: Yea, this state of public tranquillity continued during the whole time of our Lord's converse upon earth. So truly verified was this his title of *Prince of Peace*<sup>k</sup>.

Of

<sup>1</sup> *John* xiv. 27.

<sup>k</sup> *Prince of Peace.]* The peaceable reign of this glorious Prince of Peace is thus described out of the *Sibylline* oracle, by *Virgil*, the prince of poets, Ecl. 4.

*The jarring nations be in peace shall bind,  
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.  
Unbidden earth shall wreathing ivy bring,  
And fragrant herbs (the promises of spring,) }  
As her first off' rings to her infant King.  
The goats with strutting dugs shall homeward speed,  
And lowing herds secure from lions feed.  
His cradle shall with rising flow'rs be crown'd;  
The serpent's brood shall die: The sacred ground*

*Shall!*

*7. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon*

*Of the increase of his government, &c. The finest compliment that any poet could pass upon one of the greatest*

*Shall weeds and poisonous plants refuse to bear :  
Each common bush shall Sиrian roses wear.  
Unlabour'd harvests shall the fields adorn,  
And cluster'd grapes shall blush on ev'ry thorn.  
The knotted oaks shall shower's of honey weep,  
And thro' the matted grafts the liquid gold shall creep.*

In the like poetical and figurative manner is described, by our evangelical prophet, the peaceable and happy reign of the *Messiah*: “ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling, together ; and a young child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox ; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp ; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” ch. vi.— Note we, That however fabulous the antient poets story and description of the golden age may seem, there is more truth therein than is generally thought. They have described it as the *first* age, and so indeed it was ; but then it was before the fall of man ; and so but of too short continuance to deserve the name of an *age*. The state of things, before sin and death entered into the world, must necessarily have been a state of complete happiness and peace ; yet we find the holy Scriptures are rather silent to the felicity of that golden period, even because it expired so very soon ; and direct our prospect to a *future* age, that more worthily deserves that character. The prophets particularly abound with descriptions of times far more glorious than the world has yet seen ;—not as past, but as still to come :—With a retrospect indeed, to the first state of innocence, as it is to be a restoration of that happy state we lost ; and is therefore in the New Testament called, *The times of RESTITUTION of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophet since the world began*\*.—That this glorious, this more than golden, age will come, is not to be doubted ; being so expressly promised and foretold. Whether before or after the resurrection is indeed a question ; but that it will happen during the period of Christ's reign with his saints upon earth, admits of no dispute. Then shall we see a full accomplishment of all those divine pre-

*his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice; from henceforth, even for ever: the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

greatest earthly princes, was this:

*To pow'r unrival'd flat! Au-gustus rye;  
Ocean his empire bounds, his fame the skies<sup>1</sup>.*

But to shew the far greater pre-eminence of *Christ's* empire and glory, it is described by our prophet, as illimitated and boundless; still *increasing*, and never to have an *end*; and the *peace* and tranquillity of it, not like that in *Augustus Cesar's* reign, which, tho' universal, was but of short continuance: But the victory of *Christ*, even our faith, when it hath overcome the world, and extended his dominion from the one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end, shall not stop even there, but carry its laurels, the glorious trophies of *peace*, even beyond the skies; force open the everlasting gates of heaven; and lead his triumphant army into the strong city, the boundless realms of light and bliss; there to crown them with an eternal weight of glory, with joy without measure, with *peace* without end.

*Upon the throne of David.]* The *Messiah* is said to sit upon the throne of *David*, because all the promises concerning the perpetuity of his family and kingdom did chiefly and ultimately relate to *Christ*, and were fulfilled in him, of whom *David* was but a type and figure. For which reason *Christ* is often called by the name of *David*. See *Ezek.* xxiii. *Jerem.* xxx. 9. *Hosea* iii. 5. And justice and righteousness are commonly represented as the characteristics of his kingdom. See chap. v. 4. *Psalm* xlvi. 4. 6, &c.

dictions and promises; then shall we see, and not before, the full effect of our daily petition, the will of our heavenly Father done upon earth as it is in heaven; because then “the earth shall be full of the knowlege of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

<sup>1</sup> *Imperium oceano, famam qui terminat astris.* Virg.

*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this ;] i. e.* God will perform all this, that hath been foretold concerning the *Messiah*, not out of regard to man's deserts, but to his own glory ; and to the intent, that there may be always a society of people in the world, called by his name, and "heirs of the promises which he made to the fathers." So Mr. Lowth comments on this place. But may we not consider this act of God as something more than a free grace, and mere mercy ? *Zeal* carries in it a sense of great energy and force, even a strong love, and ardent affection, towards mankind ; which is the very cause that Christ himself assigns of God's mercy in our redemption.—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life<sup>m</sup>." He saith not, he employed his power, his wisdom, but that which includes both, and employs both, as instruments, in effecting our redemption, namely his *zeal*, that is, a most earnest concern and tender love for mankind ; insomuch that what might seem to men impossible, in order to bring about those glorious purposes ; yet he to whom all things are possible, hath most earnestly set his heart, as well as hand, to it, in order to bring it to pass. And therefore all opposition of wicked men and devils shall fall before him ; till all be accomplished which his *zeal* for man's salvation, as well as his own glory, hath determined to do,

<sup>m</sup> *John* iii. 6.

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## CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Second Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

L U K E , Chap. ii. to Ver. 15.

*The history of the INCARNATION and BIRTH of  
C H R I S T .*

1. *A N D it came to pass  
in those days, that  
there went out a decree from  
Cesar Augustus, that all the  
world should be taxed.*

2. (*And this taxing was  
first<sup>a</sup> made when Cyrenius  
was governor of Syria.*)

WHAT had been foretold by the prophets, of the coming and birth of Christ, is here related by the Evangelist, as now accomplished, and come to pass. The history confirms and proves the truth of the predictions.—But if the truth

of God be justified in the exact completion of that extraordinary event, his wisdom and providence are no less conspicuous, in the wonderful method by which it was brought about.—Not only the time, and every circumstance, which had been predicted, concur in the accomplishment; but the then emperor of the world, the mighty Cesar himself, is made an instrument, by his decree of state, to fulfil the prior and more supreme decree of God; even to promote a design, which he was wholly a stranger to; yea, to honour the birth of a prince, who, coming after him, should be preferred before him, and establish a kingdom, whose glory

<sup>a</sup> Gr. This first taxing.

should outvie, and whose power shou'd subdue, not only the *Roman*, but all the empires of the world, to i&ief.—By this we see, that kings, and the greatest monarchs upon earth, are but the ministers of God. What ver their vanity or ambition may project, all their efforts are, by his over-ruling power, made subservient, and finally directed, to the accomplishment of the divine will.

3. *And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.*

4. *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)*

5. *To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

the testimony of a fact which so much concern'd us, all the world, in a manner, is made witness of the time and place of the *Messiah's* birth, and of his real extraction from the *house and lineage of David*.—Little did *Cesar*, little did the world, imagine, that the poor and humble *Mary*, and her son, were the sole occasion of this imperial edict, this universal *taxing*. Yet so was it ordered by divine providence, that not only angels, and all the *multitude of the heavenly host*, but also the inhabitants of the world, tho' unwittingly, are made to attend on the birth of *Jesus*.—But if this honour was due to his Divinity, as Son of God Most High; the enrolment of his birth and pedigree was as undeniable a proof of his being truly Man, and truly son of *David*. Every incident attending this wonderful event is a lesson to our faith, and to

How powerful and sure, yet how easy, smooth, and natural, are all the ways of Providence! Nothing in this account but seems to happen by chance; and yet every step is conducted by infinite wisdom, and the most exquisite address, in order to bring about an affair of the greatest moment, that was ever transacted on the stage of this earth. All the world had an interest herein; therefore, to ascertain

our practice; instructing us both what he was, and what we ought to be; that in himself he was both God and man, our Lord and our Saviour, the object of our faith and worship; the Redeemer of our souls, and the example of our lives.—How powerful should his humility, his contempt of worldly grandeur, his obedience to *Cesar*, his love to mankind, affect our souls, when we reflect, that this same *Jesus*, who, at his first entrance into the world, set us a pattern of all these virtues, was both Lord and Christ, God of God, very God of very God, as well as truly man!

*6. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*

*7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

The Nativity of Christ is a complication of divine mysteries, wherein, as in a glorious mirror, we contemplate and behold the extraordinary blessings of this holy season, and the great truths, as well as duties, which it leads us to.—Christ, the Son of God, became the son of man, that we, the sons of men, might be made the children of

God. He was the Son of God by nature, that we, who by nature are the children of wrath, might, by regeneration, and a new birth unto righteousness, be made the children of grace. That he may heal all the distempers of our nature, he begins and goes through the whole process of the cure: To remove its innate corruptions, he is himself conceived in the womb: To take away original and birth sin, he himself is born: To strengthen the weakness of our infancy, he becomes a child: To moderate the passions and vanities of youth, the fierceness of manhood, the fears and terrors of death, he is pleased to grow up, as a young plant, and gradually to advance through the several stages of childhood, adolescence, wisdom,

and stature, to the ripeness and vigour of manhood. He appeared not, as the first *Adam* did, in a full state of perfection at once, but arrived thereto by degrees; that so we might, in him, understand the manner of the Christian progress in grace, and that we are not to flatter ourselves, as some do, with the vain hope of an instantaneous perfection; but rather think this, that our only way to perfection consists in a conformity to those measures, which the pattern of his life hath set us.—When thus our greatest exemplar had attained the fulness of age, and perfection of manly strength, then it was encountered and subdued our last and most formidable enemy, death.—Glory be to thee, O Lord, who workest all our works *in* us, and *for* us!—Observe we also the surprising humility of his holy mother! The blessed virgin was not so obedient to the royal decree, though conscious to herself of a nobler descent than Cesar's. Though long the journey, though winter, though a woman, though *great with child*, she meekly submitted to the supreme power then on earth; and thereina expressed her humility towards man. Nay, therefore submitted to the decree, even because she was *great with child*; knowing it to be the divine will<sup>b</sup>, that her son should be born at *Bethlehem*: And herein she shewed her humility, and obedience towards God.

8. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.*

9. *And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord*

We here see a further proof of God's great regard for humility. He chose not the rich and the great, the high-priests, or haughty Pharisees, to be the first heralds of his Son's birth; but the base things of the world, and things that are despised,

<sup>b</sup> This he might know by the prophets, and the current opinion of the Jewish doctors at that time, that Christ was to be born at *Bethlehem*. See *Mat. ii.*

*shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.*

10. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

even poor shepherds, did God choose, to proclaim the good tidings of joy, which should be to all people.— Shepherds watching their flocks by night, are honoured with the first notice of the *Messiah's* birth, and made

the first harbingers of it to others.—As this is an example, so should it be an encouragement, to all who have the pastoral care of souls, to be diligently vigilant over their flocks; to guide and teach them by day, and to watch and pray for them by night. Such faithful shepherds may expect every blessing of heaven upon their labours; its light, to illuminate and dispel all darkness of error and ignorance; the glory of the Lord, to *shine round about them*, and brighten their example; the society of angels to attend them; an happy success, in the glad tidings they bring of peace and salvation; and finally, as the crown of all, the beatific vision of the holy Jesus.— But we are told, *The shepherds were sore afraid*; afraid, even in the midst of the *glory* which shone around them, and the *good tidings* that were told them. This their fear is also instructive; for thus the sudden and unexpected illapses of heavenly light, which sometimes break in upon a soul benighted in a state of spiritual darkness and destruction, strike it at first with a kind of terror and surprise. It cannot persuade itself, that such glory, such joy, such comfort, belongs to her.—“ Not to me, not to me,” she cries:—I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, much less of such amazing favours.—Thus she stands trembling, and *afraid* to accept the heavenly visit of love and grace; till she hear the divine voice say, “ *Fear not, I bring you good tidings.*”—“ The Saviour is born.”—This visitation and touch of grace is not unknown to the humble soul, that constantly keeps upon its watch. And such an one

understands and feels what this remark means.—True piety feels and tastes spiritual joys, and trembles; but to boast of them, is spiritual pride and enthusiasm.

*11. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

This is a full and literal completion of that prophecy, in our first lesson (*Isa. ix. 6.*).—There, by the prophet it is foretold, in the spirit of vision, by a joyful anticipation, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,” &c. Here, by an angel from heaven, is declared unto all people the happy accomplishment of that prediction, *Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*.—And that, by the title of *Lord*, here given to *Christ* by the angel, is to be understood the ineffable and incommunicable name *Jehovah*, or *LORD* in its most exalted and transcendental sense, appears, 1st, By the tenour of the prophecy, where the special titles and attributes of the supreme God are expressly ascribed to this child and Son, whose birth is there foretold, and here related, as verified in fact, and come to pass. 2dly, It appears likewise by the context in the Gospel, and the form of the angels speech to the shepherds, where the term *Lord* being thrice repeated, without any note of distinction or difference, must necessarily refer to, and signify, the same divine being.—The two first, viz. the *angel of the LORD*, and the *glory of the LORD*, ver. 9. cannot but be acknowledged, even by our adversaries, to mean the *LORD JEHOVAH*, whose *angel* and *glory* appeared to the shepherds. And what reason can be assigned, why *Christ*, whom the same angel here calls *The Lord*, is not to be understood of the same *Jehovah*, whose glory shone around them, and whose this angel was? It is plain by the apostles creed, which those heretics, as well as orthodox Christians, profess to believe, that *Jesus Christ* is styled “*Our Lord*,” and here

here by the angel he is emphatically called THE Lord. So that whatev'r tacit evasion the Arian may have to elude that article of his creed, and distinguish away the real Divinity of our Lord, this is clearly obviated by the angel's joining with us in the same title of supreme dominion (though not of redemption and purchase), and calling him, not Christ YOUR Lord, as if the title related on'y to men, but Christ THE Lord, in an absolute and supreme sense, a Lord of the whole creation, even the Lord of hosts, that most known and peculiar title of the Most High God. Having then the confession of these heavenly spirits, that Christ is both their Lord and ours, and consequently their God as well as ours, we may well conclude with St. Peter<sup>c</sup>, that "He is Lord of all;" and with St. Paul<sup>d</sup>, that he "is over all, God blessed for evermore;" and every true Christian may say to him with St. Thomas<sup>e</sup>, "My Lord and my God."

12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying,

14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

Is this the way he manifests himself to the world? Are these the signs, by which the shepherds are to know their long-expected Messiah, their King, their Saviour, and their God?—O mystery of the

*And this shall be a sign, &c.]* Blest Lord! what a sign was this? Swaddling-clothes! a stable, a manger! Is it so the King of Israel is born? the Creator of all the ends of the earth! is he wrapped in swaddling bands? The eternal Word! the Angel of the covenant! is he speechless and mute? The Everlasting Father! an infant of a day old? The Mighty God! a sucking, a

<sup>c</sup> Acts x. 36.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

<sup>e</sup> John xx. 28.

incarnation! too big for human reason to conceive! too mortifying for human pride to believe! It needed an *angel*, yea, an *host of angels*, to attest a truth so contrary to the apprehensions of earthly wisdom, so opposite to the mistaken notions of his own people! A truth, which nothing but faith, an humble faith, divested of all prejudice, all worldly conceit, a faith reduced to an infant-like simplicity, can ever embrace and receive; and therefore was first revealed to humble *shepherds*—Hence it comes to pass, that to proud spirits, and worldly wise, this article of the Christian creed, a God incarnate, remains still an insuperable obstacle, and stone of offence. But beware, ye sceptics and unbelievers, “lest that come upon you, “ which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye, “ despisers, and wonder, and perish: For I work a “ work in your days, a work which you shall in no-“ wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”—Nay, tho’ an angel from heaven confirm it!—Judicial blindness is the just punishment, and most noted effect, of a wilful ignorance.—But be we assured, there is no peace with God, but thro’ Christ, and him incarnate; no salvation, but thro’ Christ and him crucified.—By this faith, and this only, is accomplished the full purport of the angelic song at our Lord’s Nativity,—*Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.* Amen. So be it.

<sup>¶</sup> *Acts xiii. 40, 41.*

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## CHRISTMAS-DAY.

First Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. vii. from the 10th Verse,  
to Verse 17.

### ARGUMENT.

A HAZ the king of Judah, being under great apprehensions from the confederacy and intended invasion of Rezin and Pekah (which is mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and the history related 2 Kings ch. xvi.) instead of seeking to God for protection in this time of danger, abandons himself wholly to his fears; and, in a desponding manner, gives up himself, his family and kingdom, for lost; “So that his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind,” ver. 2. To comfort them, and, at the same time, to prevent an alliance with an infidel, the king of Assyria; God here sends his prophet to assure Ahaz, that the house of David shall never be extinct.—The sign he gives to confirm this promise, is the incarnation of Christ; that the Messiah, in due time, should be born of his house and lineage: consequently, that no power upon earth should be able to extirpate the royal family of Judah, before, or rather until<sup>a</sup>, a virgin should conceive, and bear a son. I say

<sup>a</sup> Until a virgin.] According to that which was said of the temple of Peace, as quoted by Bishop Andrews on the commandments, p. 60. “That it should stand, quoad virgo perpetit.”

until,

until, for so in effect this prophecy must be understood to signify. Now this being given as the token of their present deliverance and protection, the excision of the family of David could not possibly happen before that sign should come to pass. There was no necessity therefore for an immediate completion of the sign (as some interpreters contend for); but, on the contrary, the more remote the event, and the more distant the sign here given, the more continued and certain must be the security thereby engag'd to the then house of David.

## CHRISTMAS-DAY.

First Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. vii. from Ver. 10. to Ver. 17.

10. *M*OREOVER the LORD spake again unto Abaz, saying.

11. Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God, ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

**T**HE Lord had before given assurance to Abaz, that the design of Rezin and Pekah against Judah should not stand, nor come to pass; that therefore he should take heed, and be quiet; not fear, nor be faint-hearted.<sup>b</sup>—And here again he repeats his promise of safety and protection; offering even a sign, yea, such a sign as himself shou'd choose, for his further encouragement and confirmation: A sign either in heaven or earth;—but it must be asked of the Lord, not of an idol, or false God: Of the Lord his God, not only the Lord of heaven and earth, to whom there are nothing in the depth, nor in the height above, was impossible, but of the Lord his God; the Lord God of Israel, the Lord, whom he and that people were profitably entered into an holy league and covenant with, by the sacrament of circumcision. Tho' Abaz

<sup>a</sup> Isa. viii. 4.

was

was a notorious sinner, and professed idolater ; yet, as he was of the house of *David*, and had been admitted into the church of God, his title and interest in the promises and privileges of the holy covenant, remained fixed and indelible. God himself is pleased to acknowledge this, by styling himself, the Lord *his* God ; *Ask thee a sign of the LORD THY GOD.* Let this stop the mouths of those, who allow none to be Christians, altho' duly baptized, except they be of their own stamp in certain doctrinal points, which are not of the essence of religion ; or if they come not up to that standard of sanctity which they call perfection ; and to which alone they vouchsafe the high title and character of Christianity.—Let it also be a standing comfort to those humble souls, whose frequent falls and infirmities are (in consequence of the above presumptuous opinions, and the suggestions of *Satan*) too apt to terrify their conscience, and drive them into thoughts of despair. While we continue members of Christ and his church, sin, though it weaken, doth not extinguish, our right and title to the benefits of our holy covenant. Such sinners as these, Christ himself assures us, he came to call to repentance : And this kindness and gracious condescension of God our Saviour is exemplified to us in this transaction between God and *Abaz*.—To call such, was the great end of his coming into the world<sup>c</sup>.

To tempt the Lord, is ei-

12. But *Abaz* said; I ther to mistrust his providence, or to expect some extraordinary instance of it

tempt the LORD. for confirming our belief, where the ordinary means of faith are sufficient. See *Deut.* vi. 16. *Mat.* iv. 7.—But this refusal of *Abaz* to ask a sign, did not proceed from a sufficient persuasion of God's power or veracity ; but rather from a secret

<sup>c</sup> *Mat.* ix. 13.

contempt

contempt and distrust of his word, under a pretence of modesty, and a shew of piety. And very probably because he had purposed in his heart to send for assistance to the *Affyrians*.—This seems to be the reason why the prophet, in the next verse, breaks out into that warm expostulation, *Is it a small thing, &c.* And here we may note, that as this was feigned piety, and a real disobedience, in *Abaz*, to refuse a *sign*, when he was commanded to *ask* one; so is it in a Christian now, to neglect the holy communion (that sacred *sign* of our Lord's passion) under pretence of unworthiness, while the heart secretly fosters sin, and resists the divine grace. This is a false modesty, a voluntary counterfeit humility, and downright hypocrisy.—They also may expect to hear the like reproof from God, who reject both the sacraments, of baptism and the Lord's supper, on a vain presumption, that they believe without these signs, and that their faith stands in no need of such helps; as if such means, though positively appointed of God, were wholly indifferent, if not superfluous, and unnecessary to salvation. But this, in effect, is to reject the whole Gospel of Christ, who instituted them, and who knows better than we do, what we stand in need of. Therefore, as it is a point of impiety not to believe without signs, when God will give none; or to require new signs, when there be signs and proofs sufficient; so it is a profane neglect to refuse signs when offered, as here *Abaz* did, and as is the case of all non-communicants; such especially as wholly reject the sacraments, which “Christ hath ordained in “his church, as a means whereby we receive his “grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

13. *And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*

As if he had said,—To slight and despise me, and other prophets, you may reckon a *small* and *inconsiderable thing*, because we are men; but surely it must appear

appear a most heinous impiety to treat almighty God, whose servants we are, after this contemptuous manner; and, by rejecting his repeated offers of grace and favour, to weary his patience, and provoke his displeasure.

*14. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

*The Lord himself shall give you a sign.]* That is, shall give it unasked; and such a sign, as could never have entered into the thought of man to desire or conceive. This shews, that the promised sign was to be an ex-

traordinary miracle, the immediate work of God; for so the son of a virgin must necessarily be; an event solely possible to almighty power, a real and proper act of creation. According to which sense God speaks of it, in another prophet<sup>4</sup>, “A new thing hath the LORD created in the earth, a woman shall compass a man.” And in *Isaiah* he saith, “I the Lord have created it.” In this respect also it may be called a new thing, because, in the first creation, woman was formed out of the man: But, in the second and new creation (*i. e.* the incarnation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*,) the man was formed out of the woman. To which we may add, that, with respect to Christians, and all the true children of God, the same happens in our regeneration. We are begotten of man to our natural life; but of the womb of the church, to our spiritual and second birth. Hence the church is called<sup>5</sup> “the mother of us all” (*i. e.* of all us Christians;) and Christians, so born, are called “new creatures<sup>6</sup>.”

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, &c.]* The Hebrew word [Almah] most properly signifies a virgin, and so it is translated by all the antient interpreters; and never once occurs in Scripture in any other sense, as

<sup>4</sup> *Jer. xxxi. 21.*   <sup>5</sup> *Chap. xlvi. 8.*   <sup>6</sup> *Gal. iv. 25.*   <sup>7</sup> *2 Cor. v. 17.*

many learned men have proved, against the evasions of modern Jews, and their spawn the *Socinians*, as may be seen in Bishop *Kidder's* demonstration of the *Messiah*<sup>h</sup>.—The primary signification of the word *Almah* is *hid*, or *concealed*; from whence it came to signify a *virgin*; because the custom in the eastern countries was to keep up their virgins from the view of men; never suffering them to stir out of the womens apartment.—The mother of Christ then, according to this prophecy, was to be a pure *virgin*, and He strictly and properly “*The SEED OF THE WOMAN*<sup>i</sup>;” as well as by way of distinction and eminence, because he was not to be born in the ordinary way of generation.—And if we attend to the most literal version of this passage from the original, it will not only solve the difficulties, which commentators raise concerning the great distance of time which intervened between this prophecy and its accomplishment, but make the prediction itself more clear and evident. The verbal translation is,—*Bebold, the virgin with child, and bringing forth a son.* Where observe, it is spoken, not in the future, but in the present tense, and prefaced with the adverb of shewing<sup>k</sup>; demonstrating, as with the hand, the thing spoken of, as actually present and visible. So that, in effect, it set before *Abaz* (as it still doth before all the house of *David*, that is, all the household of faith) the wonderful conception and birth of him, who was to be the seed of the woman, even that seed that should bruise the serpent's head, and deliver us from the power of our enemies.—To all former predictions concerning our Saviour's coming into the world, this new and farther circumstance is here added by our evangelical prophet, that the woman, of whom he was to be born, should be a *VIRGIN*. And God, who sees all events at one view,

<sup>h</sup> Part ii. Chap. 5.

<sup>i</sup> Gen. iii. 14.

<sup>k</sup> Cum adverbio demonstrandi.

and to whom all his works are known from the foundation of the world<sup>1</sup>, presents this *virgin* before them; “Behold, faith he, the very thing I promised; “ behold the woman fore-spoken of, now pregnant “ with the holy seed; behold the mother of the pro-“ mised child, and that mother a *virgin*.” Thus speaks the sacred spirit of prophecy of that great event, as of an object before their eyes, and immediately present: Thus also faith beholds it.—The eye of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen with the bodily eye, sees all things, whether past or to come, with the same certainty in the mirror of divine truth, and as really existent, as the natural eye discerns the objects which are immediately present and visible.

That the world in general as well as the faithful among the Jews, were in expectation (long before it happened) of this wonderful event, and very probably from this famous prophecy, appears plainly from the history of profane authors; and particularly from that altar in Egypt, which was dedicated [*vir-gini parturæ*] to the virgin that should bring forth. And from another inscription among the *Druïds* [*primogenito Dei*,] To the first-born of God; from the *Sibylline* oracles, and the testimonies of *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, two *Roman* historians, &c.

*And shall call his name Immanuel!]* We have already observed, that to be *called* is often the same in the Scripture phrase as to *be*.—By the *Messiah's* being *called* IMMANUEL, we are therefore to understand, not only his real and essential Godhead, but his manifested likevise: that he is GOD with us; i. e., both GOD and MAN; God living and dwelling *with*, yea, *in*, us men: For to this name must probably St. John allude<sup>2</sup> in that expression concerning the *Messiah*, “He dwelt among us,”—or rather *in* us; the human nature being alighted, and inhabited in, by the

<sup>1</sup> *Ad* xv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. i. 14. *τον καρπόν την*

*divine,*

divine, as in a tabernacle or temple—And what could be a surer ground of hope and assurance to the house of *David* of old, than the certain prospect and expectation of so illustrious a descendant in their family, as should at once be both God and man; that God himself should be born of their seed, according to the flesh; consequently must stand engaged, in the strictest and most solemn manner, to preserve and defend that family, to which he was to be united, in so eminent, so endearing a relation, as that of child and son, as well as God and Saviour?—How was it possible for any power on earth to destroy a family, that hath so divine, so unalienable, a privilege settled upon them?—And have not we the same infallible assurance of the divine favour and protection, who have the same exceeding great and precious privileges conferred upon us? For we also are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. As he was of the house and lineage of *David*, so are we of his: He is our head; we are his members: He is the Son, we the children, of the same God and Father. “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”—They that rightly apprehend these inestimable benefits, will easily understand the doctrine and grounds of the Christian assurance, for they will know and feel what it is, and wherein it consists.

15. *Butter and honey shall be eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*

That is, as St. *Jerom* explains it, he shall have a true human body; shall be really and truly born, as other children are, and fed like

them, in his infancy, with the same aliment of *butter* and *honey*, as was commonly given to children in that country<sup>o</sup>. He shall

<sup>a</sup> *Heb.* i. 11.      <sup>o</sup> See the custom of giving butter and honey to children, in those countries, mentioned and explained by *Cotelerius* and *Vossius*, in their notes on St. *Barnabas*, epist. n<sup>o</sup>. 6.

not therefore be a man-child in appearance only, as *Marcion* and the *Valentinian* heretics held, having only an aerial or celestial body; but a body of the very same nature with ours, sin only excepted.

*That he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.]* This is a further proof and instance of the truth of his human nature. As his body was to be of the same substance with ours, and would so appear to be, by the food wherewith it was nourished; so was his soul to be a true human soul, and should so appear to be, by its progress and gradual advancement in knowledge. Which improvement in body and mind St. *Luke* confirms<sup>p</sup>, and describes by his increasing in wisdom and stature. So that hereby is confuted the error of those heretics, who affirmed our Lord had no distinct soul; but that the *Logos*, or Word, which had assumed flesh, was the soul, which informed his body. It refutes also the opinion of those expositors<sup>q</sup> of the *Romish* communion, who held “that the manhood of *Jesus Christ* was full of wisdom “from his very infancy, by reason of the hypostatic “union with the Deity.”—Not only St. *Luke*, who saith he INCREASED in wisdom, but our prophet also (especially if we render the *Hebrew*, as it should be rendered, *until he know*<sup>r</sup>), are both very clear and express against this absolute fulness of knowledge in the child *Jesus*; and consequently we have here as full and evident a proof as possible, of the true and perfect human nature of Christ. So that the full import and sense of this prophecy corresponds exactly to that confession of faith, concerning the two natures in Christ, which all the orthodox members of our holy church make this day in her *Athanasian* creed,—“That the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, “is GOD and MAN: God of the substance of the

<sup>p</sup> Chap. ii. 52.

<sup>q</sup> Cornel. a Lapide,

<sup>r</sup> So the Chaldee,

donec sciat: So Mr. Lowth.

" Father, begotten before the worlds ; and Man of  
 " the substance of his mother, born in the world :  
 " Perfect God, and perfect Man, of a reasonable  
 " soul, and human flesh, subsisting, &c.

16. *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*

Many commentators expound this passage of the same child, whose birth is foretold in the preceding verse ; and from thence conclude, that the prophecy cannot strictly and properly

relate to our Saviour, whose birth was to be at so very distant a period of time ; but rather to some other child, then soon to be born. And our *English* version gives some countenance to this opinion. But others<sup>1</sup>, with much greater probability, understand it of the prophet's child *Shearjaſhub*, whom he had then with him, when this prophecy was delivered (see ver. 3.) ; and who is here naturally enough supposed to be pointed to with the hand. So that the translation should be, as it well may, *Yea, before this child [Shearjaſhub] shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good* ; that is, " before he shall come to years of " discretion, to distinguish between good and evil," &c.—This easy and most literal version reconciles the whole matter, making this verse most aptly follow the former, and accounts very rationally for the presence of the prophet's child, at the time of uttering this prophecy ; which we may well suppose could not be for nothing ; God having commanded, that he should be present at that juncture. The want of attending to this circumstance gave occasion to the said mistake. Howbeit, should we grant, that the child here spoken of, is the same with that mentioned in the verse preceding, and understand it of our Saviour, the *Socinian* expositors would have no such cause to triumph, as they do, in the concession :

<sup>1</sup> *Poole, Archbishop Uſher, &c.*

there

there being no inconsistency (tho' less propriety, if we expound it thus; "Before the time of the *Messiah's*" birth (therefore long before that circumstance of his "childhood, mentioned in the foregoing verse, could "happen), the land of *Israel*, and its two confederate "kings, now threatening *Judah* with an invasion, "should be destroyed by the king of *Affyria*."—Thus the word of God is a two-edged sword; both ways defends the truth of this glorious prophecy of our blessed Redeemer's GODHEAD and INCARNATION, and wounds its enemies with either edge.—Glory be to God for that unspeakable mercy! Glory be to God for the certainty of his Word!

## CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Second Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

Titus, Chap. iii. ver. 4. to ver. 9. .

*The end and design of Christ's Incarnation.*

4. **B**UT after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6. Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour:

7. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

" loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life<sup>a</sup>." Here his apostle, having an eye to the same divine love, and

**T**HIS Lesson, though short, contains in it the whole sum and substance of the Gospel, and the great end for which Christ was born and appeared in the world; namely, our redemption and eternal salvation. It declares also the cause of his coming, to wit, the kindness and love of God towards man, or more literally, according to the Greek original, the goodness and philanthropy of our Saviour God, i. e. who is God.—Our Lord himself had said, "God [the FATHER] so

<sup>a</sup> John iii. 16.

the same passage, calls it the *kindness and love of God the SAVIOUR.* Christ ascribes our redemption to the love of God the FATHER ; the apostle, to the love of God the SON. The person indeed is changed ; but the love and goodness is the very same—Yea, the God, who sent his only-begotten Son to save, and the Saviour, who came to redeem, is the same GOD. The office is distinguished ; but the Divinity of the Father and the Son is altogether one ; and therefore the love and goodness towards man, flowing from that one and undivided principle of Divinity, can be but one.—The apostle then differs not from his Master, but expounds and extends his words ; to teach us, what the true faith of a Christian ought to be ; not only a faith in the FATHER sending, but in the SON also, who was sent and *appeared* [*ἐπεφάνη*], that is, became visible to the eyes and senses of mankind ; which the Father never did at any time<sup>b</sup>.

Having fixed our faith on its true and proper object, the apostle proceeds to shew us the manner and method of our redemption, or the means used by the goodness and philanthropy of God, to bring us to salvation. First, he declares what was not the method, much less the cause, of it :—*Not*, saith he, *any works of righteousness which we had done*, but purely the *mercy and free grace of God our SAVIOUR.* In which words, as he had alluded before to the author and the motive of our salvation ; here he as plainly refers to the interpreted sense of the name JESUS, which an angel has assured us was so called, because he should *save* his people from their SINS<sup>c</sup>. Consequently the very purport of this name tends to extinguish all conceit of our own righteousness or good works.—He refers also to that other saying of our Lord's, that “he came not to call the righteous, “ but sinners to repentance<sup>d</sup>.” Every imagination of our own merits or goodness, every proud thought

<sup>b</sup> John i. 18.<sup>c</sup> Mat. i. 21.<sup>d</sup> Mat. ix, 13.

of human perfection, is a bar to salvation, as it exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and the whole tenour of the Gospel, which constantly proceeds on the supposition of our fall and corruption by original sin.—A truth, which all must necessarily believe, as well as have a deep sense of their actual sins, before they can receive any benefit from that kindness and love of God in Christ. Christ can be no Saviour to any, that are not convinced of sin. And if his people have sins, from which they need to be cleansed by his blood (for he came “to save his “PEOPLE from their sins”), who else can be free from guilt? He only that feels his distemper will apply for a cure, and be willing to accept the remedy. So he only, that is convinced of his guilt before God, will sue for a pardon, repent of his sins, and accept a Redeemer.—A warning this, not only to *Pharisees* of old, who called themselves *the Righteous*, but to our modern perfectionists of every sort, who either depend on their own merits, or who arrogate to themselves a sinless innocence, and state of perfection; or those who deny original sin. St. John tells all such, that “they deceive themselves, and have not the truth.”

2. The apostle declares what *is* the certain method which the Saviour hath appointed for bringing us to eternal life; to wit, the *washing of regeneration*, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*. By the first is plainly meant the sacrament of baptism, at which time we are purged from our old sins (as St. Peter speaks<sup>1</sup>); that is, from the guilt of original sin; and are regenerated, and made the children of God, by adoption and grace, who, before that, were the children of wrath, and under the sentence of death.

But then the true Christian baptism must consist of two parts, namely, as our church defines it, the outward visible sign, and the inward and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. ver. 8. & 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. i. 9.

grace;

grace; or, as our Lord more expressly terms them, Water and the Holy Ghost.<sup>s</sup> By the first is represented the mystical washing away of sin, through the blood of Christ; by the other is effected our renovation, or new life, through the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.—These two must concur and co-operate together, if we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven.—Without the previous laver of baptism for the remission of sin, there is no receiving of the Holy Ghost: Without a subsequent reformation of our hearts and lives, by the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, our baptism will prove of no effect. In true baptism the Spirit doth indeed accompany the water and the Word, to regenerate us, and effect the new birth; but still this is not sufficient for salvation, except our own sincere endeavours concur therewith, to renew our affections, and change our whole nature from carnal to spiritual.—And to assist such endeavours, the church, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, hath instituted the sacred office of confirmation, as the most effectual means for receiving the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost.

8. This is *a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.*

The motive and method of our redemption having been declared, the apostle next shews the great end of Christ's Incarnation, and our faith in him (or, as he expresses it, *in GOD*, for except we believe in him as God, our faith is vain); namely, that we should be

*careful to maintain good works*; that is to say, perform true obedience, the third and concluding branch of our triple vow in baptism.—Repentance prepares us for the remission of sin by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (ver. 5).

<sup>s</sup> John iii.

Faith intitles to justification, or acquittal from the sentence of death, by the meritorious sufferings of Christ: But it is obedience, and the keeping of God's holy will and commandments, yea, walking in the same all the days of our life, that alone shall put us in possession of the prize of our high calling, the inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven, *according to the hope of eternal life* (ver. 7.)—This then is the great end of our Lord's incarnation, which we this day celebrate; yea, of his whole life, and grievous passion; namely, to purchase to himself a people, zealous of *good works*. This is the tenour, yea, the mean design, of the sacred covenant, into which we are baptized.—And this we are the more heedfully to observe, as we find it declared, by that very apostle, who elsewhere seems to decry works, and so strenuously asserts faith, as if it were the whole of the Christian religion, and of itself sufficient to salvation.—A due attention to the lesson before us, and the baptismal vow, to which it refers, may convince the *Solididians* that they plainly mistake St. Paul's doctrine, concerning faith and works. The works of the LAW he indeed rejects as unnecessary to salvation, yea, as impracticable; but evangelical works, or the moral duties of the GOSPEL, which he every where calls *good works*, he describes and requires as the inseparable attendants of the true Christian faith. In short, they are no other than that faith and obedience, which we equally and jointly promise, in our Christian covenant, as the indispensable terms and conditions, on our part, for obtaining the inestimable benefits and privileges which are promised us in that covenant, on the part of God.

It is true, St. Paul, as writing to unbelieving *Jews* or *Gentiles*, insists chiefly on the necessity of faith in Christ; whereas St. James, writing to Christians, who had taken upon them the baptismal vow, whose faith therefore was right, but their practice not answerable thereto, insists as warmly on the necessity of *good works*; that they ought to shew their faith by their works,

work; or, as *Peter* speaks, “ add to their faith virtue.”—The want of attending to this plain distinction hath made all the difficulty about reconciling these two apostles; whereas, in reality, there is no manner of difference between them at all, if we consider them in the above light.

<sup>b2</sup> *Pet.* i. 5.

The

*The SUNDAY after CHRISTMAS.*

Proper Lessons for { M. P. ISAIAH, Ch. xxxvii.  
E. P.—Ch. xxxviii.

## P R E F A C E.

**T**HIS first of these lessons relates the terror and apprehension that Hezekiah was under, on bearing the menacing and blasphemous messages of Sennacherib, king of Assyria: But withal, it represents his piety in flying to God in his distress; first, by prayer, God by his prophet, and then publicly, in his house.—next is pleased to return an encouraging answer to the prayer and pious addresses of Hezekiah; and seconds it by a speedy and miraculous deliverance.

The general instruction we may learn from the example of this good king, is plainly this; that we ought to have recourse to God in all perils and dangers; to pray to him for help; to commit ourselves to his protection; and to trust in his mercy.

But, from the choice which the church hath made of this chapter for part of her service on this day, we are led to an higher and more special use of this lesson; namely, to meditate on that mighty deliverance from our spiritual enemies, which the same God, who saved Hezekiah and his people by his angel, hath wrought for us and all mankind, by his only Son the ever-blessed Jesus.

It were no difficult task to draw the parallel between the deliverance granted to Hezekiah, and the saving effects of our Redeemer's birth. But this meditation may better be left to the retirements and exercise of the closet; that there, while in secret we muse on our misery and danger, and the seasonable interposal of divine mercy; on the inveterate

veterate rage of our enemy, and the almighty arm of our Protector and Deliverer; the fire of divine love may enkindle in our hearts a warm sense of gratitude and duty, suitable to the salutary and most inestimable benefits of this solemn, this holy, this most joyful season.

### Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

#### ISAIAH, Chap. xxxvii.

1. *AND it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.*

2. *And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.*

3. *And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.*

4. *It may be the LORD thy God will bear the words of Rabshakeb, whom the king of Assyria, his master, hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the*

**I**N this lesson we may see the triumph of humility over pride; of faith over impiety and infidelity.—Hezekiah had, indeed, at first given too much way to his fears, and betrayed a weakness of faith unworthy of so religious a prince. His mean submission at first to the king of *Affyria*, his bribing him with a present to retire, and stripping the very temple for treasure, to avert the danger, was, doubtless, a sin. But now reflecting how criminal, as well as how vain, all such worldly precautions had been, he endeavours to repair his fault by an humble and more pious recourse to the divine protection. Hence it is, that we here find him offering up his devotions to God, with such deep and solemn expressions of penitential sorrow;—He rends his clothes,

LORD thy God bath  
beard: wherefore lift up  
thy prayer for the remnant  
that is left.

5. So the servants of king  
Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

We, on one hand, a lively instance of the frailty of human nature, even in the best of men: But, on the other,, we observe as useful an example of retrieving our errors by repentance and prayer.—As for those who apply to secular helps only, in times of distress; they may learn from hence, that all such projects shall prove like abortive *births*, vain and unprofitable; not only give great and tormenting pains, but end in sorrow and disappointment. The *children* may come to the birth; but there shall not be strength to bring forth.—What is begun without God's grace, is not intitled to his blessing.

6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

if we correct ourselves; if we judge our selves, we shall not be judged; if we condemn our selves, we shall not be condemned.—Thus we find him dealing with Hezekiah, thus with David; thus was Magdalen,

he covers himself with sackcloth, and goes into the house of the Lord: At the same time intreating the prophet's intercession and interest with God, as humbly distrusting his own: In all which we

But here let us behold, adore, and imitate, the benignity and indulgence of the divine nature! The prophet's answer carries in it not the least air of anger or reproach for Hezekiah's shameful fall, his distrust or sacrilege.—“ A light punishment, for a great offence, is satisfaction enough to a tender father; ” especially to our heavenly Father: To him humility is a sufficient propitiation; he never strikes,

thus the Prodigal, admitted to pardon, and received into favour.—And the answer to all humble penitents is ever the same, as here to *Hezekiah*, *Be not afraid*.

8. *So Rabshakeb returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.*

9. *And he heard say concerning Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying.*

10. *Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.*

11. *Bebold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly, and shalt thou be delivered?*

12. *Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the*

*So Rabshakeb, &c.]* How emphatically does that little particle *So*, express the gracious return made of God to the king's prayer, and the verification of the prophet's answer to his message! *So*, that is, in consequence of the king's humiliation and prayer, and pursuant to the comfortable assurance of protection by the prophet, the storm which threatened Jerusalem with such imminent danger, was diverted another way, and began to disperse. The proud *Assyrian*, with his mighty army, was called off to defend himself, and secure his own dominions against the invasion of a very powerful enemy<sup>a</sup>.—By this and many like instances in Scripture, we may observe how true that saying of God is towards those who faithfully serve him, and trust in his mercy; “ And “ it shall come to pass, that “ before they call, I will an- “ swer; and while they are

<sup>a</sup> *Josephus*, in his history of the Jews, tells us, that *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, hearing that *Tirhakah*, the king of *Ethiopia*, was leading an army thro' the desert against *Assyria*, was obliged to return back, and for the present to quit his design against *Jerusalem*.

*children of Eden, which were in Telassar?*

13. *Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?*

14. *And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD.*

15. *And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying.*

16. *O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.*

17. *Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.*

18. *Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries.*

19. *And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of mens bands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.*

<sup>a</sup> *Isaiah lxv. 24.*

“ yet speaking<sup>b</sup>, I will “ hear.”—Before ever *Hezekiah* had made his prayer, or applied to the prophet, yea, before he had any notice of his danger, it is certain that the Lord had provided for his relief, by this seasonable diversion.

To the insolence and impiety of *Sennacherib*, *Hezekiah* opposes only a profound humility, an ardent prayer, a steady faith. He is more sensibly concerned for the honour and interest of God, than for his own. The insult offered to himself is too inconsiderable to mention, when such blasphemous outrages are committed against the Almighty, the *Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*.—This is ever the surest way to engage the divine protection: The more solicitous we are for the glory of God, the more concerned will he be for our safety.

20. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from bis  
band, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou  
art the LORD, even thou only.

21. Then Isaiah the son  
of Amoz sent unto Heze-  
kiab, saying, Thus saith the  
L O R D God of Israel; Whereas thou hast prayed to  
me against Sennacherib,  
king of Affyria:

22. This is the word  
which the L O R D hath  
spoken concerning him; The  
virgin, the daughter of Zion,  
hath despised thee,  
and laughed thee to scorn;  
the daughter of Jerusalem  
hath shaken her head at thee.

23. Whom hast thou re-  
proached and blasphemed?  
and against whom hast thou  
exalted thy voice, and lifted  
up thine eyes on high? even  
against the Holy one of Is-  
rael.

24. By thy servants hast  
thou reproached the Lord,  
and hast said, By the mul-  
titude of my chariots am I  
come up to the height of the  
mountains, to the sides of  
Lebanon, and I will cut  
down the tall cedars thereof,  
and the choice fir-trees  
thereof: and I will enter

Jerusalem was the figure  
of God's church; and he  
calls her a *virgin*, because of  
the purity of religion which  
is ever in the true church  
herself; and that chaste wor-  
ship, which she pays to the  
one true God.<sup>c</sup> And it  
ought to fill all her true  
members with joy and com-  
fort in their sufferings or  
dangers, that God expressly  
counts all that their enemies  
do against them, as done  
against himself. He so  
espouses their cause, as to  
maketheir interest his own.  
—And to shew us how lit-  
tle danger there is from our  
most formidable enemies,  
when the Lord takes our  
part, the church is here in-  
troduced, under the char-  
acter of a *virgin* (the most  
timorous of all the most ti-  
morous sex,) as *laughing* and  
*shaking her head* at the loud  
threats of the haughty *Affy-  
rian*. How mortifying must  
such contempt be to a proud  
spirit! How noble an ar-  
gument of a strong faith,  
to smile in the midst of dan-

<sup>c</sup> So St. Jerom: *Ob castitatem Religionis, et unius Divinitatis cultum.*

*into the height of his border,  
and the forest of his Carmel.*

25. *I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.*

26. *Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it, and of ancient times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.*

27. *Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.*

ger!—We may safely *smile*, and *laugh* our enemies to *scorn*, when God hath chained them up.

These are the words of God, in direct answer to the proud boasts of the *Affyrian* king; wherein he reminds him, that all his successes were wholly owing to God; that it was his providence predetermined those events, and *brought them to pass* in their appointed time; that he had made him only the instrument of divine vengeance upon such cities as deserved utter destruction; that therefore he had weakened the hands of their *inhabitants*, that they might have no power to defend

themselves.—Alas, how small a share of glory is there left for the mightiest heroes, the most prosperous mortals upon earth, when God comes to state the account, and claim his share of the success!—Where is the honour of triumphing over men, who are already subdued to their hand; men, in themselves, without either courage or strength: men, without God, weak as *grass*, inconsiderable as *blasted corn*?

28. *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.*

29. *Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is*

How furiously soever the enemies of Christ may rage against him and his church, none of their designs are hidden from his all-seeing eye: He sees and knows their darkest plots, and closest

*come up into mine ears: therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou cameſt.*

the fisherman hath the fish, when his *hook* is in its *nose*; or the rider hath his horse, to turn him which way he pleases, when the *bridle* is in his *lips*.—Let good men think of this to their joy and comfort; and bad men and persecutors, to their shame and conviction<sup>d</sup>.

30. *And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye ſhall eat this year ſuch as growth of itſelf: and the ſecond year that which ſpringeth of the ſame: and in the third year ſow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.*

closest confederacies against his holy religion, and his faithful servants; and can put a stop to their *rage*, whenever he pleases. He hath them every moment as much in his power, as

The crop of the current year, we may presume, had been destroyed by the *Aſſyrian* army, and the whole country laid waste by the invasion of ſo vast a multitude. The ensuing year, we are told, was the ſabbatical year<sup>e</sup>, when it was forbidden them to plow and ſow their ground.—What

was to be done in ſuch a cafe, ſo great an exigency, where famin threatened them with no leſs desolation than the enemies army? Their delivery from this danger ſeemed only a reprieve from an immediate ruin, to reserve them to the ſorer and more lingering death of famine; their present hopes being interceped by the ravages of the enemy, and their hands tied up by their law, from ſupplying that loss by any provision for the ensuing year.—Why, God prevents both their danger and their ſin; and by a timely and

<sup>d</sup> To ſtrengthen and improve our remark on verſe 28. and 29. ſee Archbiſhop *Leighton's* eleventh ſermon, new edition; the deſign of which, throughout the whole diſcourse, is to conſirm our faith and truſt in God's tender care and paſtevation of his church.

<sup>e</sup> See *Exod. xxiii. 11.*

most gracious interposal of his providence (which at the same time that it relieved their want, was to be a token also to confirm their faith) he consulted not only their necessity, but their duty.—*This shall be a sign, &c.* He promises that the earth of itself, and without their labour, should produce a new crop for their present food; that this miraculous harvest should also shed a sufficient quantity of seed for the supply of their sabbatic year, so as to prevent the danger either of a famine, or of infringing their law; of suffering in their persons, or their conscience.—How notable an instance and proof is this of God's goodness, and providential care! He sends not his mercies by halves; he consults both our temporal and spiritual interests; provides for our bodies and our souls; and no good thing will he withhold from them that live a godly life, and put their trust in him.—From hence we may also gather this useful lesson, that where the instituted means are not in our own power, he will then supply the defect some other way. If what is in our power keep pace with our duty, God will not fail to bless and assist our labour; but when it is a duty to rest, we shall be no losers by intermitting our works.—The earth, we see, can, without plowing or sowing, produce us an harvest: The wealth, therefore, we raise by our industry and care, is more owing to the divine blessing, than to our own skill and pains.

*31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.*

*32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.*

Let us not doubt, saith St. Gregory, of the divine favour and grace, when we find the heavenly seed, as it were, lost for a time and hidden in our hearts: It is then, though imperceptible to us, taking root *downward*, by a profound humility; and the deeper this root descends, and the stronger hold

33. *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.*

34. *By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.*

35. *For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*

The promise of defence and protection to them, is a sure word of prophecy to us.—We have a strong city, we also have a *Jerusalem*, which is ensured from the enemy by the same gracious promise, the same defending hand, and for the sake of the same Almighty LORD, the Son of God; and Son of *David*: Who also, to confirm to us this blessed ensurance of his church, has now more expressly renewed it in his gospel; and declared, “That the gates of “hell shall never prevail against her.”

36. *Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four-score and five thousand: and when they [who survived] arose early in the morning, behold, they [that were smitten of the angel] were all dead corpses.*

hold it takes of our hearts, the firmer will be the stem, the fairer and more flourishing the fruit, of those virtues and good works, which grow from that root; and shall bear fruit upward.—Then may we also hope, that God will most assuredly protect and save us out of the hands of all the enemies of our souls.

No Scripture is of any private interpretation; wherefore we Christians have an interest in this text, as well as *Hezekiah* and his people.

Let it also confirm our faith, to observe the exact completion of this prophecy on the then inveterate enemy of God's church and people; as well as the wonderful methods of divine justice, in suiting so legibly the execution of his judgments to the particular crimes of men. He that had lifted himself

37. So Sennacherib<sup>f</sup> king of Assyria departed, and went, and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

38 And it came to pass as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar haddon his son reigned in his stead.

up against the great Father of men and angels, is punished by the hands of his own sons: He that had threatened destruction to the temple of God, is slain in his own: He that blasphemed and despised the true God, falls a sacrifice before his own idol, which had no power to defend him; and becomes a lasting monument, not only of divine vengeance, but of the

folly as well as impiety of those who pay their devotions before senseless images; and, in a more spiritual sense, of all those who place their confidence in any worldly helps, the idols of their own setting up; and neglect or despise the service of God and his church, or that faith and dependence on him, wherein our only safety and security doth consist.

<sup>f</sup> So Sennacherib.] See remark on the particle *so*, on ver. 8.

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## The Sunday after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

The Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxviii.

P R E F A C E.

**T**HIS lesson sets before us the history of Hezekiah's sickness, and miraculous recovery;—the message brought him by the prophet, that he should surely die;—his prayer;—God's gracious answer thereto, with a promise, confirmed by a miracle, of adding fifteen years more to his life;—the means used for his cure, and his song of thanksgiving and praise for the divine mercy.

But it seems a question of some difficulty to resolve, why the church has appointed this chapter for one of her lessons on this day; and how to account for the propriety of it, upon this occasion.

Finding no solution in any of the ritualists and expositors, on our liturgy, may we not conceive the reason of the choice to be as follows?

The mystical sense of this history, which concerns us more than the literal and private interpretation, was doubtless more immediately in the church's view and intention: We may therefore consider the case of the sick Hezekiah, as that of the whole body of mankind, who since the fall of man are all in a state of spiritual sickness; and all under the sentence of death.—The prophet (that is, the messenger and minister of the divine law) saith to every one of us,—Thou shalt die, and not live.—This is the sentence of condemnation, which was originally

*passed on our first parent for his transgression, and is still repeated, by the same divine decree, against every son of man.—For all have sinned, and incurred the same penalty.*

*But although the law and the prophets speak grievous things to the sinner, and bring the heavy tidings of death; the divine goodness hath provided a way to escape.—The blessed Son of God, that divine WORD [the Logos,] who came to Isaiah with a reprieve to the mourning Hezekiah, came also to us, and, as at this time, brings us the glad tidings of life and salvation.*

*Were we as sensible of the mortal disease of our souls, as Hezekiah was of his bodily distemper, we should express as great, or rather much greater, concern than he did. We should turn our faces toward the wall; that is, draw off our thoughts and affections from the world, and retire into ourselves; we should lament and pray unto the Lord, to spare us a little, till we recover our strength, till we obtain a grant of pardon and peace, before we go hence, and be no more seen.*

### The Sunday after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

#### Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

#### I S A I A H, Chap. xxxviii.

**I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death: and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD; Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

**I**N those days.] Though this be related after the defeat of Sennacherib, it is agreed by most interpreters to have happened before, or rather during some time of that invasion.—Thus, when troubles are permitted of God, they seldom come alone.—An enemy in the land, a dangerous disease in the body, and a message of death from God:—Three grievous afflictions! No greater in temporal life!

life ! But in spirituals this is ever the case of every sinner.—The world and *Satan* invading him without, the flesh and a body of sin within, and the sentence of divine justice denouncing death.—*Hezekiah was sick unto death.*]—From 2 Kings xx. and 2 Chron. xxxii. the disease appears to have been pestilential,—naturally mortal; so, most eminently, is the plague of sin.—The pious *Hezekiah* was sick:—Neither the greatest kings, nor the most holy men, are exempt from sickness and mortality; much less from the contagious infection of original sin.—He is bid to *set his house in order.*—One necessary part of preparation for death is to settle our worldly affairs: So the church directs, that “the sick man be admonished “to make his will, and to declare his debts, what “he oweth, and what is owing unto him, for the “better discharging of his conscience, and the qui-“etness of his executors.”—If this be prudent and necessary in worldly affairs, how much more in the spiritual?

2. Then *Hezekiah* turned  
his face toward the wall<sup>a</sup>,  
and prayed unto the *LORD*.

He turned toward the wall,  
either of his room, for the  
greater privacy; or, as some  
suppose, toward the temple, for the greater efficacy.

—*He prayed unto the LORD.* An example this, to all that labour under bodily sickness; but more so, to those who are smitten with the deadly disease of sin; as indeed all are, though all do not feel it. Too many can say with *Solomon's* son (*Prov.* xxiii. 35.) “They have stricken me, and I was not sick: they have beaten me, and I felt it not.”—But the humble penitent imitates the mourning *Hezekiah*, hears and trembles at the sentence of death; then turns:—*Then*, that is, after he has heard, with the ear of faith, the sentence of his Judge, *Thou shalt die*, he

<sup>a</sup> So *Daniel*, in his prayer, turned his face toward *Jerusalem*; i. e. toward the place of the temple.

*turns*, and prays. He does not cut off all hope, nor abandon himself to a fullen despair. He *turns* indeed from the world, and all worldly helps (from these he despairs of any relief;) but not from God. To him he turns, to him he prays; prays in secret, to him that heareth in secret. Though he know the sentence of death cannot be reversed, it may be suspended: Therz may be a reprieve. Yea, he knows and believes there is still room for mercy, even though he die. Though the body perish, the soul may yet be saved, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

*3. And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore.*

faith, and a strong, but humble assurance of the divine goodness; and the tears which the royal penitent shed, approved both his faith and his repentance to be sincere.—No greater comfort on a death-bed, than the reflection on a life well spent; no greater support against the terrors of conscience, than a confidence in God's mercy, through Christ.—Faith and humility are the best attendants on a sick bed, the best lenitive to a wounded spirit.—If humility weep and mourn, faith speaks peace and comfort.

*4. Then came the Word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,*

*5. Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father; I have heard thy*

If we consider only the words, they carry in them as great an air of arrogance and boasting, as those of the proud *Pharisee* in the Gospel: But the disposition of the heart gave them a quite different sense.—God, who looks at the heart, accepted them as the language of

*This shall be a sign, &c.]* Of this sign much is said and disputed by expositors. But if we accommodate this, in the mystical sence, to the method of our redemption by Christ, we may consider *Alaz* as the emblem of man

*prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years.*

6. *And I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.*

7. *And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken:*

8. *Bebold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees which is gone down in the sun-dial of Abaz ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.*

plague, but also go up to the house of the LORD, the emblem of heaven, there to praise God, and live with him for ever.

9. *The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.*

and terrified at the approach of death. But how few, after recovery from a dangerous illness, prove so thankful to God for the mercy as they ought, and as they promised, to be! Too many return with the swine to their mire: The example of *Hezekiah* is rarely pursued.—We hear frequent petitions put up in our churches for the sick and distressed, but very seldom any thanksgivings for recovery or relief.

in a state of sin: On his dial the sun is just going down; his day of grace is near expiring, even within two degrees of setting. But repentance changes the whole course of nature. The sun of grace, that enlightens the soul, and is to restore its life, goes retrograde to the course of the world;—gives a quite contrary bias to our life, to bring us back again: Moves, as it were, from west to east; from the region of darkness to the region of light, even to him that is called The East. Faith in him lengthens our day and term of grace: Is likewise a sure sign that we shall not only recover of our

When sickness comes, and death stares men in the face, scarce any are so hardened, as not to tremble and repent. Even the virtuous and the good are alarmed

10. *I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.*

Virtue and piety is the only proper life, as well as business, of man.—Bad men, who have no sign of virtue to shew<sup>b</sup>, are *cut off* before they begin to live. Even

serious persons, who have been less careful, than they ought, to maintain good works, will find reason to complain, at the approach of death, of the *cutting off of their days*, and that they are *deprived of the residue of their years*. They will then see and lament the neglects of duty, as well as errors, of their past life, and look upon death as an hasty and untimely end.—But those who die full of good works, are (in Scripture-phrase) said to die *full of days*. They may say with their Saviour, “I have finished the work “thou gavest me to do<sup>c</sup>;” or with St. Paul, when the time of their departure is at hand, “I have fought “a good fight, I have finished my course, I have “kept the faith<sup>d</sup>,” &c. To such, “Honourable “age is not that which standeth in length of time, “nor that which is measured by number of years; “but wisdom is the grey hairs unto them, and an “unspotted life is old age.”

11. *I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.*

12. *Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day*

*Hezekiah* seems to bemoan his removal into another world as a misfortune, rather than a blessing; as if he had no notion or expectation of the beatific vision, but thought the state of the dead to be a state of dormition, a mere sleeping with his fathers; and that when he departed this life, he should neither see the *LORD in the land of the living* (that

<sup>b</sup> *Wisdom v. 19.*

<sup>c</sup> *Tobit xvii.*

<sup>d</sup> *2 Tim. iv. 7.*

<sup>e</sup> *Wisdom vi. 8, 9.*

is,

even to night wilt thou make  
an end of me.

13. I reckoned till morn-  
ing, that as a lion, so will  
be break all my bones: from  
day even to night wilt thou  
make an end of me.

14. Like a crane or a  
swallow, so did I chatter:  
I did mourn as a dove:  
mine eyes fail with looking  
upward: O LORD, I am  
oppreſſed, undertake for me.

is, heaven( ; nor behold man  
any more with the inhabitants  
of this world. Thus com-  
mentators expound this paſſage,  
and from hence take  
occasion to remark what im-  
perfect ideas even good men  
under the law had of a fu-  
ture state.—But if, with  
more attention, we observe  
the tenor of this eucharistic  
hymn (for ſo it is), there  
will appear no neceſſity to  
charge *Hezekiah* with igno-  
rance, or uncertainty, concerning a future ſtate.—  
Carnal men have, at all times, thought very groſſly  
of futurity, and the ſeparate ſtate. But it appears,  
by the psalms and the prophets, that good men, un-  
der the law, had the ſame hopes of happiness, upon  
their departure, as we have. Their happiness was  
doubtless the ſame in kind as ours, but not ſo per-  
fect in the degree.—That there was a diſference in  
the measure of their felicity, and that of good Chriſ-  
tians, is plain from what St. *Paul* afſerts, *Heb.* xi. 39,  
40.—Nor could this otherwise be before the reſur-  
rection and ascenſion of Chriſt; before the Head  
(their Head and ours) was glorified, and made per-  
fect. This conſummate happiness the antient saints,  
*who through faith [in the promise of it] had obtained  
a good report* (as the aſtrophe exprefſes it), *did not re-  
ceive, before our Lord's exaltation; that ſo they, with-  
out us, ſhould not be made perfect.*—But that *then* they  
received it, is not to be doubted, when he opened  
the kingdom of heaven to all believers.—If then we  
attend (as I ſaid before) to the ſcope of this hymn  
of thanksgiving, we ſhall perceive, that *Hezekiah* does  
not exprefſ any doubt or diſſidence of his future hap-  
piness, much leſs a diſbelief of the ſoul's immortality,  
and vital exiſtence after death, or even thought of  
ſuch

such a state of dormition and insensibility, as some dreamers, of antient and modern times, have imagined; but rather chides and reproves his own weakness, for yielding too much to those terrors and impressions of fear, which the first surprize and apprehension of death had raised in his mind. What he said and thought of himself, upon that occasion, is described in ver. 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. and the substance or result of the whole is expressed in that conclusion of his complaint,—*O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.* The sense of his sin, it is plain, sat heavier on his mind, than the mere concern for parting with the comforts and enjoyments of this life, or any dark or imperfect notions he had of another. It was the conscience of his own imperfect slate of grace, and unfitness to appear before his Judge, rather than the pain of sickness, or fear of death, which *oppreſſed him*. And therefore he concludes all, with that prayer of faith and humility, *O Lord, undertake for me.*—Of faith, I say, in the LORD Jefus, who is the undertaker and advocate for mankind; of humility, as he was an offender, and conscious of his sin.—And when death comes with so sudden a surprize, as it did to him, what man, however righteous he be, but will be shocked at the danger, and alarmed at his own unworthiness? But if, with him, we consider, who hath *undertaken* for us, we shall both overcome our fears, and escape the danger. This was the ground of David's hope, that the Lord would plead his cause. This he comforts himself with, in his Penitential (Pſ. xxxviii.); when his friends had forsaken him, his enemies sought his life, talked of wickednes, and imagined deceit, and he had not a word to say in his own defence, even as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth, he then flies to God his Saviour, as the only Mediator and Advocate;—*Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God.*—And that this recourse to Christ, as our only Advocate and Intercessor, is more especially

cially seasonable and necessary on the bed of sickness, is pointed to us by *Elibu*, in *Job* (ch. xxxiii.) ; “ If then there be a messenger with him, an inter-“ preter, one among a thousand, to shew to man his “ uprightness;” that is, if Christ, the *Messenger* of the covenant, the *Interpreter* of God’s will, &c. be present to direct his faith aright, to inform him wherein his righteousness doth consist,—not in his own works, but the merits of his Saviour ; then (as he goes on) “ God is gracious unto him, and saith, “ Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have “ found a ransom.” Thus, O Lord *Jesus*, do thou answer, do thou undertake for us, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. And indeed this was the very end of our Lord’s coming into the world, as at this time, that he might *undertake* and answer for us.

15. *What shall I say? he bath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*

16. *O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.*

17. *Bebold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

18. *For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that*

In these six verses are expressed, not only the grateful sense, which every person, who recovers from a fit of sickness, ought to have for the mercy and goodness of God, in sparing his life, and granting a further space to perfect his repentance in, but they suggest to us the right use of sickness, and the sentiments most proper to be entertained while we lie on our sick bed ; and likewise how we ought to behave, after we are restored to a state of health. 1. The sick man is to look upon himself as God’s patient, and God as his physician ; yea, as Lord also of life and death, sickness

*go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.*

19. *The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*

20. *The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the LORD.*

ness and health. 2dly, To consider, that sickness and death are the inflictions of divine justice, and the due penalty of sin; life and health the act of grace and mere favour. That the longest temporal life, or even recovery from sickness, is but a reprieve from death, a short respite from the common sentence of mortality. *Hezekiah* had fifteen years added to his life:

Some

have a longer, many a much shorter, all an uncertain, term allowed. 3dly, That the sickness of the body is the medicine of the soul, being designed to awaken in us a deep and serious apprehension of our spiritual diseases and danger, which, in time of bodily health and ease, we are too apt to neglect. 4thly, To excite in us a lively faith in Christ, by whose mediation alone, the execution of our sentence is deferred; and death, when it comes, is disarmed of its sting.—These are the proper meditations for the time of sickness. But we are likewise taught, by this example of *Hezekiah*, what our behaviour ought to be, during our sickness, and after a recovery. 1st, How grievous and painful soever our sickness be, we are not to give way to any peevish and fretful passions, much less to murmur and complain against the afflicting hand of God; but when nature recoils, and the flesh tempts us to repine, then, with the royal patient, should we fly to God, and consult him, even *what* we should *say*, and how we ought to speak; immediately to check all foward complaints; and stifle in the birth every impatient, discontented thought, with this short question, *What shall I say?* and with this wise reply, *He hath spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.*—If he hath spoken that

that it should be so, 'tis fit we should humbly acquiesce in his word. If we suffer from his hand, and *be himself hath done it*, it is fit we should patiently submit to his will. *2dly*, When health is restored, we must not, as some do, return to the vain pleasures and luxury of life, much less relapse into our old sins; but rather *go softly* for the remaining *years of our life*; that is, set a strict guard on our words and actions, and retain an holy and religious seriousness, in all our future life and conversation; never forgetting that *bitterness of soul*, which (in our sickness) the sense of sin, horrors of conscience, and fear of death, had awakened in us. *3dly*, To express a grateful acknowledgment of the great goodness of God, not only in sparing our life, but even for his scourge and fatherly visitation; thanking him for our recovery, as a blessed opportunity for completing our repentance, and improving our virtues; rememb'reing, and confessing, with good *Hezekiah*, that *by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit.* *4thly*, To shew our gratitude, not only with our lips, but in our lives; not only in private, but in public; not only in our families [*the father to the children*], but in the church; there *sing our songs of praise to the stringed instruments* of an heart well tuned with grace and devotion, *all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.*—These are the sentiments, and this the language, of a true penitent: This his conduct, yea, this his proper health, when raised from sickness.—Such an one alone can truly be said to *live*:—Such only can say, *The living, the living, he shall praise thee*: For to him is restored a double life, the life of nature, and of grace.

*21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.*

There might be some natural virtue in such a *plaster* in ripening the sore; but the speediness of the cure must be ascribed to a supernatural cause. The virtue

22. *Hezekiah also had Jaid, What is the sign, that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?*

tue of every medicine is from God. We are not therefore wholly to slight the use of physic, nor wholly to depend thereon,

for the recovery of health.—The physician may prescribe; it is GOD alone that heals.—He that created both the means and the effects, is the sole author of the cure; and therefore solely intitled to our gratitude and praise.—The health of our bodies he restores by such helps as these; but the health of our souls by his holy Word, and the merits of Christ.—He is the physician of both: He is all in all to us: We should dedicate both, and be all in all to him, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end of all our blessings.

## The CIRCUMCISION of CHRIST.

### PROPER LESSONS.

The First } for M. Pr. { *Gen.* Chap. xvii.  
Second } { *Rom.* Chap. ii.

The First } for Ev. Pr. { *Deut.* Chap. x. Ver. 12.  
Second } { *Coloss.* Chap. ii.

### P R E F A C E.

**T**HE first lesson for the morning-service instructs us in the manner and nature of circumcision, and the time and occasion of its first institution. The other lessons teach us the application and use, which the institution suggests to us. And the contents of all the four lessons for this privileged day are so apparently expressive of their propriety, as to need no further explication, than what may be found in the ensuing comments thereon.

#### First Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer,

##### GENESIS, Chap. xvii.

i. **A**ND when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Trinity, which here appeared to Abram: That WORD,  
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by

**T**HE Lord appeared, &c.] Not the Father, but the Son; for "No man" (as Christ himself assures us, *John* vi. 46.) "hath seen the Father at any time." It was then the *Messiah*, or Second Person in the Holy

by whom the worlds were made ; the same LORD, who formed man out of the dust ; who judged and condemned him after his fall ; then admitted to a new covenant of grace and mercy, upon condition of faith in him. He it was that now *appeared*, to renew and establish the same covenant with *Abram*.—And this Son of God, who, as at this time, became the son of man, he that to *Adam* called himself “ the “ seed of the woman,” expressly styles himself here, *the Almighty GOD*.

2. *And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.*

3. *And Abram fell on his face : and God talked with him, saying,*

4. *As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.*

5. *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram ; but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

6. *And I will make thee exceeding faithful, and I will make nations, of thee ; and kings shall come out of thee.*

7. *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant ; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

The covenant then, here made with *Abraham*, was the very same with, and a renewal only of, that covenant which Christ had made with *Adam*, immediately after his fall, and is therefore commonly called the second covenant.—Our Lord here calls it His covenant, as it was, by his mediation, obtained of God the Father, on the behalf of man, and here renewed by him.—Observe we also, he appears on the behalf of God, as he was both Mediator and God : *Abraham*, in like manner, appears on the part of man, as he was man, and head of the holy seed.—These were now the two contracting parties (the very nature of a covenant requiring parties to stipulate and accede to the conditions proposed;) Christ, in his mediatorial office, appearing for and representing, God the Father

8. *And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

9. *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations.*

10. *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me, and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised.*

11. *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your fore-skin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.*

12. *And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.*

13. *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.*

Father (as the person more immediately offended by the transgression of man); *Abraham* contracting for himself and mankind, but more especially as representative of the church, and of all that should after believe in Christ, whether of his natural or spiritual seed. As to the first covenant, which was a covenant of works, and unflinching obedience, it was made with *Adam*, the first man, as the root and representative of all mankind in general; but had been violated by him; and, in consequence thereof, by all his posterity; so that all mankind were become guilty before God. The second covenant, which is that of *faith*, was indeed made with him by the same Mediator, immediately after his fall; but his posterity of the old world soon broke the sacred bond, and fell into an extreme and universal corruption, excepting one man, *Noah*, and his family. With him God again renewed the covenant of peace, as with a second *Adam*, or head of mankind; adding thereto the token of the rainbow, to be, as it were, a faithful

faithful witness in heaven to his part of the covenant, and, at the same time, to encourage, as well as to remind, mankind to be faithful to their engagement. But his descendants also fell away, by a general defection and apostasy, into idolatry, and a shameful ignorance of the true God. To preserve therefore this second covenant; and grand charter of our salvation, from being totally abolished and destroyed from among mankind, our gracious Mediator is pleased to lay to his hand a second time, and to single out the faithful *Abraham* from the rest of the world, and to renew his covenant with him; but with him, not (as was before observed) as head or representative of mankind in general, but as head and father of the faithful; *i. e.* of all those, who should believe in Christ, and lay hold of this covenant, through faith in his name: For which reason all such are called by the Apostle<sup>2</sup>, “The children of faithful *Abraham*” and he is often styled, “The father of the faithful.”—And to this gracious covenant, thus renewed with him, is annexed the *token* of circumcision, to be, as it were, a sure witness, on the part of those who should subscribe to this sacred act and deed; as well as be a standing evidence and monument of their interest therein? To be likewise a seal or impress set upon them, to distinguish them from the rest of the people of the world.

But alas! in process of time, even the *Jews* also, who were the natural seed of *Abraham*, proved revolters from God. They retained indeed the seal of the covenant, and were most tenacious of *circumcision*; but the conditions they most lamentably infringed, as appears by their history, and the frequent expostulations of the prophets, and of our Saviour. They had quite discarded repentance, and fallen away from that faith, which was the distinguishing virtue of their father *Abraham*; insomuch that when the *Messiah*

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iii.

came, though he came to his own, his own received him not ; they were so far from believing on him, that they crucified and put him to a shameful death. In so desperate a case what was the Lord to do, that his covenant might not be wholly annulled, and the rest of mankind, through the prevarication of those who had rendered it of no effect, be left to perish utterly ? Why, he comes himself in person to revive and re-enact the glorious instrument of our peace and reconciliation. Not now in the form of GOD, with majesty and great glory, as he appeared to *Adam*, to *Noah*, to *Abraham*, or to *Moses*, but in the form of Man, in a meek and lowly state, to transact for men with men. In the first place, by a perfect obedience to, and fulfilling all the obligations of the first covenant, the covenant of works, " he took " it away, nailing it to his cross<sup>b</sup>," as a deed cancelled, and fully satisfied. But as to the second covenant, the covenant of grace, he made no alteration in the substance, but in circumstantial, The seals on the re-execution, he changed from the *Jewish* sacraments of circumcision and sacrifice, to the easy and milder institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper: And as to the evidence to such his act and deed, he appointed his twelve apostles to be his witnesses to this his gracious covenant, so renewed and executed afresh. To them he said, " Go ye into all the world, and preach " the Gospel (*i. e.* this holy covenant) to every creature<sup>c</sup>," &c. And, " Ye shall be witnesses unto " me, both in *Jerusalem*, and in all *Judea*, and in " *Samaria*, and unto the uttermost parts of the " earth<sup>d</sup>."

By this history of the SECOND COVENANT, we may plainly see, that it is from the beginning the very same, and no other than that, which was made with our common head and ancestor, after his breach of the first ; and so extends to all mankind, as the

<sup>b</sup> Col. ii. 14

<sup>c</sup> Mark xvi. 15.

<sup>d</sup> Act*s* i. 8.

standing act of grace and indemnity, against the pains and penalties incurred by the violation of the first: That it is therefore the only ground of our hopes, and the common charter of our peace and salvation; the very title-deed, by which the grant and purchase of our heavenly inheritance is secured to us.—The ignorance of this, or at least the neglect of considering the nature, the benefits, the end, and design, of this holy covenant, is the cause, not only of all the sin and wickedness in the world, but of all false religion, all heresies, schisms, and contentions, relating either to the true faith, or the true church; to the doctrines, or the institutions, of Christianity.—There would never have been either Popery or Presbytery, Quakerism or Anabaptism, superstition or enthusiasm, no, nor vain scruples on one hand, nor vainer presumptions on the other, concerning the state of grace, much less any deism or infidelity, were this sacred covenant rightly understood.—But miserable are they, who deny there is, or ever was, such a covenant made with man<sup>e</sup>; miserable they, who slight it now as needless or obsolete; miserable they, who renounce it, after having been once admitted into it; but more miserable are those, who, professing to hold it, do yet allow themselves in an open breach of their solemn vows and obligations, by an unholy and impenitent life.—“How shall we “escape, if we neglect so great salvation!”—The reason of this, and of the necessity there lies upon every one, who lives within the sound of the Gospel, why they should enter into this second covenant, and keep it, is set before us in the following verse, and our remarks thereon. See also both the second proper lessons.

<sup>e</sup> To wit, *Whitefield*, and his followers, who absolutely deny, that any second covenant was ever made with man. See his letter in the weekly miscellany.

14. *And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his fore-skin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant.*

"Unto the pure all things are pure," saith an apostle<sup>f</sup>. Wherefore the spiritual eye looks at the spiritual use, and considers the holy end and design of God in appointing this extraordinary rite, and painful amputation. St. *Augustine's* opinion seems the most rational, as well as most instructive; that "by the *fore-skin* is aptly denoted original sin, or the corruption of nature: We bring it with us into the world; but it must be done away, when we enter into covenant with God, and stand candidates for heaven."—The first sign and seal of this covenant, to wit, the seal of circumcision, was made on the most shameful part of the body, to express the great shame and reproach of sin; for which reason God calls the circumcision of the *Israelites* at *Gilgal*, "the rolling away the reproach of *Egypt*".<sup>g</sup> But the seal of the same covenant, as now renewed by the Gospel, to wit, the seal of baptism; is impressed not on a shameful part, but on the seat of modesty, and ingenious shame, the forehead; to intimate to us, that not only the guilt, but the shame, of sin is now taken away, by the laver of Christ. His undergoing both the seals in his own body, has expiated the curse both of punishment and shame.—But who so rejects, as well as he that breaks, the seals of any covenant, rejects and annuls the covenant itself; and thereby forfeits all the benefits and privileges stipulated, and intended to be conveyed. Hence it followed, that whosoever under the law, through any wilful omission, neglected to receive, *circumcision*, or who afterwards vacated or disclaimed that mark in his flesh, was, *ipso facto, cut off from his people*: that is, from all part or lot in the blessings of the covenant.—The very same excision is

<sup>f</sup> *Titus i. 15.*

<sup>g</sup> *Josb. v. 9.*

now

now the penalty of the like omission under the Gospel. The wilful neglecter or renouncer of baptism (which is the seal of the evangelical and Christian covenant) becomes obnoxious to the same sentence of spiritual excommunication. For as the terms of the covenant are still the same, the sanction and punishment of contempt is likewise the very same. *That soul is cut off from his people*; i. e. from all communion with the church, and from those advantages and mercies, which are annexed to this federal relation.—He can be no member of Christ, who is not a member of his body the church; no child of God, who despises or forsakes his covenant; consequently, no inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, which is the promise and reward of the same.

*Note.* Much hath been written and said, both by Jewish and Christian expositors, to explain the meaning of the excision here denounced, against the contemners and violators of this divine instruction. But the doctrine of the Spiritual Life seems to be the best expounder of it; Which is as follows;—The life which *Adam* lost, on his fall from God, was not the natural and human, but the spiritual and divine. It was the life of grace, not of nature: That life, which he had received from the Holy Spirit, and by which he became a living soul: This life was the perfection of his other lives, the only source and principle of his happiness, and the very life of his soul; by which alone he was united to God, and made partaker of the divine nature. But this life was immediately lost on his transgression, pursuant to the penalty decreed,—“ In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Yet was it promised to be restored to him and his descendants, by virtue of the second covenant, on the conditions of repentance and faith, with a sincere, though imperfect, obedience. Howbeit in this new honour man continued not long: This second covenant also was soon broken; the immediate descendants of *Adam*, and

and afterwards of *Noah*, and even of the faithful *Abraham*, violating every condition of it, and thereby relapsing into the state of spiritual death, which was the penalty of the first covenant, and effect of original sin. Nevertheless our merciful God did not suffer his holy covenant utterly to cease among men, nor be abrogated, and totally annulled, as we have before noted in our history of it.—On his own part it still subsisted, and was still tendered to all; yea, with an oath confirmed, that it should never fail; hence called the *everlasting covenant*<sup>b</sup>, and often promised that it should continue so. See *Jerem.* xxxiii. ver. 25, &c.—Hence then, as the soul, on forsaking the covenant of life and grace, becomes dead in trespasses and sins; but, by admission into it, is revived and restored to the life of the Holy Spirit (for which reason it is called, “the renewing of the Holy ‘‘Ghost’”), we may the readier apprehend the reason and meaning of this seemingly severe law at the institution of *circumcision*. That *the soul of the uncircumcised man-child should be cut off from his people*.—The penalty we see is denounced against the *soul*, because the soul being the only subject of spiritual life or death, and the second covenant being the only appointed means of receiving the Spirit of God, which is the life of the soul, as the soul is of the body; it must necessarily follow, that where these means are omitted, through any wilful neglect, the soul is of course excluded from any participation of it, and from all the privileges of divine grace; is still under the sentence of condemnation, still a child of wrath, without God and without hope, because without the Holy Spirit.—And this severe penalty against the contemners of circumcision is not repealed, but rather more strongly enforced, by the Gospel-law: For so our Lord has expressly enacted, concerning the sacrament of baptism, by which we now enter into his

<sup>b</sup> Ver. 7. & 19.

covenant,

covenant, that “ except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” And again, “ He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

15. *And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

16. *And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.*

17. *Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?*

18. *And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!*

19. *And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.*

20. *And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I*

Many are the reflections which present themselves on this part of our lesson. But the main design of our church being to instruct us in the great end and design of our holy covenant, and to shew us, that it is the very same, both under the law and the gospel, it seems necessary, and of most use, to dwell somewhat longer on a subject of so high importance, as to be indeed the very one thing needful; and yet but little considered, or too slightly attended to.

We have already observed, that the change of the seals, upon renewal of the second covenant, from circumcision and sacrifice, to baptism and the Lord’s supper, hath made no change at all in the substance and tenour of it. This will more clearly appear, on our comparing the transaction we meet with in our lesson, between God and *Abraham*, at the institution of circum-

<sup>1</sup> John iii.

<sup>2</sup> Mar. xvi. 16.

cision.

*have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall be begotten, and I will make him a great nation.*

21. *But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.*

22. *And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.*

23. *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their fore-skin, in the self-same day, as God had said unto him.*

24. *And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin.*

25. *And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin.*

26. *In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.*

27. *And all the men of his house, born in the house,*

*cision, and the form of our vow in baptism.*

1. In the first place, the END and DESIGN of the second covenant, both in circumcision and baptism, are the very same; namely, to restore man to that righteousness he lost by his fall, and thereby make him holy and happy.—*Walk before God, and be thou perfect*, said God to Abraham; i. e. “Be thou acquitted from the guilt of original sin, and consequently from the sentence of eternal death, which had passed upon all men, through the sin of their first parent; and in token thereto, and of the renewal of my covenant of peace with thee and thy seed, be thou circumcised in the flesh of thy fore-skin.”—If this was the end and design of circumcision, so is it likewise of baptism, which (as St. Peter, by way of distinction, expresses himself) “doth now save us!”—But how was Abraham, and how are we, saved and acquitted from the penalty and vindictive power of the first covenant, and made perfect in the sight

*and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.*

of God? Why, it is said,  
“ he believed, and this was  
“ counted unto him for  
“ righteousness.”—It is not

said, he was made absolutely righteous, and as innocent as man was before his fall; but so accounted, so esteemed, so accepted of God, through faith in the merits and perfect righteousness of his Son *Jesus Christ*; i. e. in virtue of the second covenant; not for his works, or sinless obedience, which were the terms of the first. This is the explication which the gospel gives us of the case of *Abraham*, and which it proposes as an exact parallel and pattern to us christians: From whence we conclude, that the covenant which God made with him, and now with us, is the very same; as will further appear under our next head. In the mean time we learn, that the righteousness, and present perfection, of man, doth not consist in a state wholly and absolutely perfect, without the least taint of sin, but in this blessed privilege of our covenant, That sin is not imputed to us, if so be we believe, as *Abraham* did—(See the epistle for this day, *Rom. iv.*) Such a faith will be reckoned unto us also for righteousness. And this divine privilege of grace and mercy is all that is generally meant by the words perfection, righteousness, and justification, which we so often meet with in both Testaments, especially the new; and is the sure and certain ground of that assurance, which all have, or may have, concerning their present state, who are duly entered by baptism into this holy covenant; which, for that reason, the apostle calls, “ The full assurance of FAITH<sup>m</sup>;” and which, with respect to our future and final state, the same apostle calls, the “ full assurance of hope unto the end<sup>n</sup>. ”

2. The terms and conditions are also the same, namely, mercies promised on God’s part, and fidelity

<sup>m</sup> *Heb. x. 22.*

<sup>n</sup> *Heb. vi. 11.*

on man's, as will appear to all that consider and compare the two terms.

Is a Christian obliged, by the terms of his vow, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil?—This did *Abraham* in a figure, by forsaking his native country, his kindred, and false gods.

Is a Christian, in virtue of this covenant, made a member of Christ, and the child of God? So was *Abraham* also admitted into this high privilege of adoption, as appears by the new name which God gave

*Covenant.*] This term, like many other terms in divinity, having been perverted and abused by our sectaries, in a late century, to the worst of purposes, has sunk not only into disuse, but a sort of contempt, among the members of the church. Yea, this disuse and contempt has introduced so general an ignorance of the nature and even reality of our holy covenant (while our pulpits and catechisms are almost wholly silent on the subject), that we have the more need to attend very seriously to the doctrine our lessons of this day suggest, concerning this prime fundamental; which we have also called (as it most certainly is) The *CHAPTER-DEED* of our salvation, and the very *GOSPEL* itself. Much might be added to what we have said thereupon, were there room for it, in an essay of this kind, to prove that the covenant so often mentioned by *Moses*, the *Psalms*, and the *Prophets*, is the second covenant, by which we are now saved, not the first; that is the same both to the *Jews*, and to us *Christians*; yea, that is tendered to all mankind. But there is one remark, which an excellent \* divine of our church hath made, that deserves our particular notice, as of infinite use to understand the nature of our covenant, and of the terms whereby we stand engaged to God, and God to us, and therefore must not be omitted. It is this: That whereas it appears, that the affair of man's salvation is transacted by way of covenant, we are to look upon it as transacted and managed in a judicial or legal, not in a natural, way: That therefore the whole doctrine of our salvation, as laid down in the *Scriptures*, is agreeable to the allowed practices of mankind, in their legal or judicial proceedings one with another, and is worded in the *Scripture* accordingly.—The use of considering our covenant in this light, and with analogy to human dealings and obligations, is very great; and, at the same time, very intelligible and plain to common sense and reason.—For further illustration hereof, the reader may please to consult the above-mentioned author, p. 219. and his 11th chap. from p. 244.

\* *Staynœ, of salvation by Jesus Christ alone, vol. i.*

gave him at his circumcision; it belonging to fathers to give names to their children<sup>a</sup>.

Are we made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven? So was *Abraham* also, under the type and emblem of the land of *Canaan*. Yea, the benefits, and great privileges, of the church, are conveyed both to him, and to us, under the same double notion of grace and glory. As he “ sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with *Isaac* and *Jacob*, the heirs with him of the same promise, and looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God<sup>b</sup>;”—so we have a time of sojourning here, a time of warfare and trial, in the church militant upon earth; but still “ seeking and desiring, as he did, a better country, that is, an heavenly.”

3. The object also of his faith and ours is the very same, even the Lord Jesus Christ. For so our Lord himself testifies of him, saying to the Jews, “ Your father *Abraham* rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad<sup>c</sup>.” But how saw he the day of Christ? Even as we now do, by faith, and not by sight. And if our fidelity and obedience prove the same with his, then shall we also obtain the like approbation from God, in this our state of probation and pilgrimage here; and the same precious reward, which the faithful *Abraham* is now in possession of; even righteousness imputed here, and crowned hereafter..

<sup>a</sup>[Names to their children.] From hence it became the stated custom among the Jews to name their children at the time of circumcision (as we now do in baptism.) So St. John, Luke i. 59. So our Saviour, Luke ii. 21. When eight days were accomplished, “ for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus”—The insertion of the letter Η, or H, out of the ineffable name JEHOVAH, into the names both of *Abraham* and *Sarah*, is also a mystical token of their adoption and union to God; and shews that he was circumcised, as we are baptized, εἰς τὸ οὐρανόν, INTO the Name of God.

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xi. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. ver. 16.

<sup>c</sup> John viii. 56.

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## The CIRCUMCISION of CHRIST.

Second Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ROMANS, Chapter ii.

A R G U M E N T.

**I**N this lesson we are taught wherein the right use of the second covenant doth consist, and who they are that abuse it: That, upon admission into it, all become obliged to perform the terms: As the Jew stood engaged to keep the law of Moses, so the Christian binds himself to obey the gospel, or law of Christ: That we are not to boast of the privileges, but to practise the duties, of our holy covenant; not to judge and condemn the faults of others, but our own; and chiefly to attend to the purity of our lives.

1. **T**HEREFORE thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.

**T**HE apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, described the deplorable state of wickedness and ignorance, which had universally overspread the heathen world, comes now to bring his charge against the Jews, in order to convince them likewise of sin, and to prove them also to be guilty before God; consequently, that they stood equally in need of the redemption offered by Jesus Christ in the gospel. They had, indeed, a more

more perfect rule than the law of nature and conscience (which was all the *Gentiles* had to walk by); for they had the rule of God's word; and might by this light discover the gross ignorance and impieties of the heathen, and have a sufficient knowledge of divine truths, and of their own duty. But alas! they were so far from living up to their own law, that they were sunk into a greater degeneracy of manners than the *Gentiles* themselves; allowing themselves in crimes not only against the express dictates of their own law, but of natural conscience; so that they were more *inexcusable* than they.—The like may be said in private life: To employ our greater light in spying out the faults of others, or to think to conceal our own failings by judging and condemning theirs, is no less folly than sin, as it renders our guilt much greater than theirs.—The superior advantage of knowledge and skill in divine truths is so far from extenuating any sins against natural conscience, that it greatly aggravates the guilt, and leaves us wholly *without excuse*.

*2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things.*

It cannot be said in excuse of sin, that God has ever left man without sufficient light both to discern the distinction between mortal good and evil, and the equitableness of divine justice, in punishing or rewarding, according to the nature of our actions. This the *Gentiles* saw by the light of reason; the *Jews* much more by the light of revelation. Hence the apostle, speaking as a *Jew*, and therefore as having the fuller evidence of God's law and will, affirms so positively, *We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things*; i. e. against all such, whether they be *Jews* or *Gentiles*, whether circumcised, and in covenant with God, or uncircumcised, and not formally entered into covenant with him.

The

The outward form and ceremony alters not the nature of sin, or God's justice. Sin ever was, and ever will be, the object of his wrath and vengeance.—The abolishing or punishing of it, is the whole end and intent of the law, whether natural or revealed; and death the penalty enacted against all transgressors of it, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*: No external privileges exempt the one, nor wilful ignorance excuses the other.

*3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

*4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

*5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wra'b against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

*6. Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

*7. To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life:*

*8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey un-*

*O man:—* The apostle seems here to address himself to all mankind in general, as equally involved in guilt, and obnoxious to the penalty of death; yea, not only as criminals convicted, and under the sentence of condemnation, but as contemners of the divine justice and goodness; fondly presuming to escape the punishment which the law had denounced, and which they knew they had deserved; and thereby affronting both the truth and holiness of God: Others abusing the mercy and forbearance of God, and flattering their impenitence to continue in, rather than forsake, their sins, which the divine goodness and forbearance intended to reform.—This being the general state of mankind,—all being guilty before God, and none righteous, no not one; what remedy remained in so desperate a case, to P

*righteousness; indignation, and wrath;*

9. *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.*

10. *But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.*

11. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

man is, or could be, saved by his own works: And as it was on behalf of all mankind (for that all had sinned) there can be no room to think, that *there is any respect of persons with God:* For all having incurred the same penalty, the *Jew* as well as the *Gentile*, God could be under no obligation to respect the one more than the other, nor to have any other motive but his own goodness and free grace, to shew mercy to either.

12. *For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.*

judged and condemned by some law. But as St. Chrysostom observes, “ There are three kinds of law, “ the natural, the written, and the law exemplified “ in works.” The apostle refers to every one of these in the course of his reasoning, but leaves it to the reader’s judgment to make the distinction. The *Gentiles*

prevent a total excision? What atonement, by any one man for another, when all were sinners alike, and all under the same sentence of condemnation? — There was no other way left to save and redeem lost man, but, according to the parable of the king in the gospel, to send his own son to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. As this was the sole act of God, it must be absurd to think, that any

*Without law.]* This is to be taken in a limited and restrained sense; for, properly speaking, no man sins, but he sins against some law, for “ sin is the transgression “ of the law;” and no man perishes, but who is first

ties sinned *without law*, that is, without having the written law,—without any law promulgated by Scripture or Revelation. And if they *perished*, they perished *without law*, that is, not as offenders against the written law, but against the law of nature and conscience; but they who *sinned in the law*, that is to say, the *Jews*, who had the written law, and sinned against the express letter of it, these, at the day of judgment, will be judged and sentenced according to that law.—As this sets before us the great equity of God's justice, in trying all men, at the last day, according to the law he gave them, so it asserts his universal providence and goodness towards all mankind; it being evident, from the apostle's argument in this lesson, that none are left without a rule, and light sufficient to lead them to repentance and eternal happiness. The *Gentile* had the law of reason and conscience, as a natural light to expound and enforce it. The *Jew* had, indeed, the addition of a written publication, with a divine comment of revelation to assist the natural light of conscience; but then there was this disadvantage attending it, that although it helped nature, it created a greater obligation of duty, and rendered every sin the more criminal and inexcusable: Which consideration ought to awaken and terrify the stupid indifference of too many Christians, who neglect all these, nay, far greater advantages than these. We have the law of nature and conscience, as the *Gentiles* had; we have the further and much clearer light of Scripture and Revelation, which the *Jews* had. But, above all, we have a law not only inscribed on the heart by nature, yea, not only published in the sacred writings by the hand of God, but exemplified in the life and practice of the divine Law-giver himself, the holy J E S U S; and all doubts and difficulties cleared up, and made easy, by the blessed SPIRIT of God, whom he has sent down from heaven to lead us into all truth. And to bind these obligations

tions still more strongly upon us, we have entered into a solemn vow in our baptism, to observe, and faithfully obey, the divine law in its threefold respect, as natural, as written, as operative and spiritual; for that is doubtless implied in our promise, to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life.

13. (*For not the bearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*)

14. *For when the Gentiles which have not the law [written] do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*

*Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.)*

15. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

among Christians, is, that we do not enough attend to the law of nature. This, as the lesser light, we seem to neglect or despise: And for this reason it is, why there are so few, so very few, good Christians to be found; why many, who pretend to be saints, and imagine they have attained to a sinless state, and the pinnacle of perfection, are in truth base and wicked men, yea, worse than infidels. To be a good Christian,

We are not to suppose, that God published and wrote his law to entertain our ears, or gratify an idle curiosity, but to teach us our duty, and engage our obedience. They only are *just*, and will be so accounted of God (or as the apostle expresses it, *be justified*, that is, acquitted from the penalty of the law) who are *doers*, as well as *bearers*, of it; who obey, both in word and deed, the commands of God; who are Christians in heart and practice, as well as in name and profession. Great indeed are the privileges of Christians, great the advantages, above what the Gentile, or even the Jew, enjoyed: But the common mistake, and fatal error,

a man must be first a good heathen; must attend diligently to the law of nature, and the dictate of conscience [—*quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,*] before he can be capable of the higher advantages of Grace and Truth, which the Christian religion was designed to confer. If the *Gentiles*, even without a written law, were *a law unto themselves*, the conscience sitting as judge to accuse, or excuse, their thoughts and actions, all they who violate or reject this inferior light, and think themselves exempted from the obligations of natural conscience, will find themselves so far from being *just before God*, that they will be counted worse than heathens, and receive a much severer punishment than they, *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel.*

17. *Bebold, thou art called a few, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God:*

18. *And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.*

19. *And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness.*

20. *An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.*

21. *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

The apostle proceeds to illustrate this in the case of the *Jews*, who, at that time especially, although in covenant with God by circumcision, were yet so very corrupt in their morals, that they had fallen below the level of the common virtues of heathens. This degeneracy is too-too common among Christians, and should make us tremble, to think that the holy covenant we enter into in our baptism, serves only to make us worse than other men, if it does not make us better. We often see that honour and honesty, that justice and humanity, that temperance and chastity, that mildness and modesty, yea, that sense of religion, and fear of God,

22. *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*

23. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonour-est thou God?*

24. *For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

among Turks and Infidels, Quakers and Nonconformists, which is not to be met with in too many of our church people: Not that we should hence conceive a prejudice against the church, as some have rashly done; and fallen away from her communion: But think this rather (though to superficial enquirers it may seem an hard saying) that this very scandal is one, though a melancholy proof of the reality and truth of

that church whereof we are members; because it hath been foretold by the Scriptures; at least is far from being a just objection, or sufficient argument to destroy her charter, or invalidate her title. This may appear not only from the description here given us by the apostle of the reigning corruptions among the Jews of his time, yea, among their teachers, their guides of the blind, and instructors of the foolish; but from that very different treatment our Lord met with from the Samaritans, and his own people. He came to his own, and his own received him not; whereas the Samaritans heard him gladly; yea, one and all believed him to be the *Messiah*, the Saviour of the world: And yet, notwithstanding all this, our blessed Lord declared to them, that "Salvation was of the "Jews."<sup>b</sup> And why of the Jews? Not because they were more righteous than others<sup>b</sup>, or a better sort of people; but because, although the most stiff-necked and perverse of any, they had the covenant and promises. "God's fire was in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem<sup>c</sup>," as the prophet speaks; that is, his church was among them; his *Fire*, or holy Spirit,

<sup>b</sup> See Deut ix. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Isaiah xxxi. 9.

was

was with them ; and the church, as it were, was the furnace wherein that sacred fire was lodged.—I have dwelt the longer on this head, to shew the falsity and fallaciousnes of that definition which some men have given us of the church ; namely, that it “ is a society “ of such as are perfectly pure, and wholly exempt “ from sin.” That this mark of absolute purity and perfection is no scriptural mark, appears from what hath been already said ; and may further be evinced from our Lord’s parable of the tares among the wheat, and the net which took in both the good and the bad. But these men, and all such pharisaical spirits, arrogating to themselves a spotless perfection, and greater sanctity than the rest of the world, admit of none others to be true members of Christ’s church but such as themselves. For this reason they separate themselves from her communion, as not holy and pure enough for them : They set themselves up for *guides of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness* ; drawing away her members into bands and assemblies, which themselves have set up, not only without any legal authority, but contrary to the standing laws both of church and state ; scattering the poor flock of Christ, and causing divisions amongst us : Whereas the true, certain, and indelible mark of a Christian, and consequently of the Holy Catholic Church, as visible upon earth (which is a society consisting of such members), is the baptism of Christ, which he ordained for admission of members into his mystical body the church, and the holy covenant which they then made. Where this covenant, and this baptism, have been duly administred, there, and there only, is the church : The covenant is the charter of our incorporation, and baptism the seal. But these men confound the visible with the invisible church, external or relative sanctity, with that which is internal or inherent ; not distinguishing between that holiness, which we have by virtue of our relation to God, as dedicated to him in baptism, and that more perfect holiness

of life and spirit, which alone can fit us for heaven; and without which no man shall ever see the Lord: Yea, they confound the state of the church militant upon earth with that of the church triumphant in heaven, where alone the spirits of just men are made perfect.—In the mean time it behoves us to attend to the manifest difference which the Scripture and the church have ever made between a perfection of state, and a perfection of grace. The first we obtain, as we have said, by baptism, and the privileges of our holy covenant; and may be as certainly assured thereof, as we can be of our being rightly and duly admitted into the church by baptism, which is therefore called a pledge to assure us thereof.—The other perfection, to wit, of actual grace, depends on our own sincere endeavours in the due use of means, and the co-operation of God's Holy Spirit.—So our lesson proceeds.

25. *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

that which is the badge of our Christian state and profession, will prove no other than the seal and earnest of our condemnation.

26. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?*

which equally oblige all mankind, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; being written, as the apostle had said before, verse 15. in their hearts. By the *uncircumcision*, therefore, are meant not only those *Gentiles*, who had some knowledge

It is no doubt a great advantage to be distinguished from *Jews* and *Heathens* by the external use of baptism, and the means of grace, if we form our manners accordingly, and perform our holy covenant: Otherwise,

By the *righteousness of the law* is to be understood, not the observance of the ceremonial or positive institutions of the *Mosaic law*, which were binding only to the *Jews*, but the moral duties,

knowledge of the true God, such as *Jethro*, *Naaman*, *Cornelius*, and others who were proselytes of the Gate, *i. e.* had embraced the *Jewish* religion, but remained uncircumcised; or such as afterwards were converts to Christianity from among the *Gentiles*, without receiving circumcision; but it means also those *Gentiles*, who lived without any revelation, or written law. Even these by the light of nature, and the dictates of conscience, which an heathen rightly called a *God* within, might, and many did, keep this *righteousness of the law*. They abstained from those vicious actions, which natural conscience forbud, and practised those acts of virtue, which it commanded, such as justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. And whoever did so, we are here encouraged to believe, that they were admitted to God's favour; —not as stipulating parties to a covenant with him, by any voluntary or formal act of their own, but in virtue of the general covenant which Christ had made with God for all mankind, and their performance of the obdiential part, as far as their reason, and the light of nature, informed them. Thus then *their uncircumcision was counted to them for circumcision*: They were counted worthy of the benefits of a covenant, which they knew not of, for the sake of their fulfilling those moral duties and obligations which they did know.—These considerations may be of great use to enlarge our apprehensions of the divine philanthropy, and universal benignity to mankind; when we see it was not confined to one family or nation only, that of the *Jews*, but extended to all the world; so that even those who had no revelation, were never left under an absolute incapacity of being saved.

27. *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge*

On the other hand, it must needs be a great delusion to expect the benefit and privileges of our holy

*thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?*

virtue for virtue's sake, without the promise or prospect of reward, judge and condemn us Christians who, though we know these things, and have the prize of our high calling set before our eyes, yet wilfully *transgress the law*, and refuse to obey.

28. *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh.*

29. *But b he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

It is not then the outward appearance of religion, nor the entering into a covenant with God, according to the letter, that will save us. It may admit us into the church, as it did *Simon Magus*; but it is a good life only, and the sincere performance of our baptismal vow, that will admit us into heaven, and put us in possession of that inheritance, which was promised at the font. It is the *inward circumcision*, that of the heart, and in the spirit, even the cleansing our souls from all dead works, all filthinesses of flesh and spirit, which alone will intitle us to the *praise of God*, and to that happy sentence at the last day;—“ Well done, thou “ good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy “ of thy Lord.”

covenant without a faithful performance of the conditions.—How justly may these heathens, who practised

and condemn us Christians who, though we know these things, and have the prize of our high calling set before our eyes, yet wilfully *transgress the law*, and refuse to obey.

It is not then the outward appearance of religion, nor the entering into a covenant with God, according to the letter, that will save us. It may admit us into the church, as it did *Simon Magus*; but it is a good life only, and the sincere performance of our baptismal vow, that will admit us into heaven, and put us in possession of that inheritance, which was promised at the

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## The CIRCU M C I S I O N of C H R I S T.

First Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

D E U T. Chap. x. Ver. 12.

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE purport of this lesson is to teach us, that the end and design of entering into covenant with God, is, that we should fear him, love him, and obey him. The terms of circumcision and baptism are exactly the same; to wit, Repentance, grounded on an holy fear; Love, built on a true faith; and Obedience, animated by a sense of duty and gratitude.

12. **A**ND now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?

13. To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good?

**A**ND now, &c.] Moses, in this book of Deuteronomy, acts not the part of a lawgiver, but of a preacher and expounder of the divine law; and chiefly explains, and insists on, the nature and extent of that obedience, which God required thereto; namely, that it ought to be holy and spiritual; not the obedience of the hand only, but that of the heart and affections also; the obedience of fear, but

but of fear improved into love; a filial, not a servile, fear; the obedience of children, not of slaves. And can any thing be more just, than to *fear* so great, so holy, so jealous, a God? Can any thing be more reasonable, than to *love* so benificial, so kind a being, who hath so signalized his love to us? Can any thing be more *for our good*, and truest interest, than to obey those laws, which are no less designed for our happiness, than for the glory of him that gave them?—*Moses* here, and the apostle (1 Tim. i. 5. do in effect say the same thing; that “the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”

14. *Bebold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.*

15. *Only the L O R D had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.*

In these words of *Moses* we may observe an admirable and strong reasoning, whereby he convinces the *Israelites*, in a most affecting manner, of the indispensableness of the obligation they were under, above all other people, to love the Lord their God. As if he had said; “ You see, that although God be the absolute Lord and Sovereign of all creatures,

“ extending his dominion not only to this lower world, but to yon visible *heaven* which we behold, “ with all its immense and numberless bodies of light; nay, to those more exalted regions of glory, the very *heaven of heavens*, the seat and residence of angels and blessed spirits; nevertheless he hath, by a most distinguishing mark of favour, chosen you out of all the nations of the earth, to be his peculiar people. To you hath he continued his love, for the sake of your ancestors piety, notwithstanding your own refractory behaviour, and extreme unworthiness. How ought ye then

" to fear (but with reverence and love) this great,  
 " this gracious being ; who, in a special manner, is  
 " the *LORD your God* ; and who requires no other  
 " return for all his mercies, but that duty and re-  
 " spect, which is so justly due from you, and all  
 " his creatures ; but from *you* more especially, as  
 " you are in covenant with him, and the peculiar  
 " objects of his grace and favour ?"

For the great God of heaven and earth thus to court the love of his creatures, his sinful creatures, is a most astonishing condescension ! But how much more astonishing is their ungrateful return !—Base and ungenerous in a *few* to so bounteous a benefactor ; but, beyond all expression, monstrous in a Christian, whose obligations are infinitely greater, as their light and knowledge are so much enlarged.

The *fore-skin of the heart*

16. Circumcise therefore  
*the fore-skin of your heart,*  
 and be no more stiff-necked.

is that superfluity of naughtiness, as the apostle calls it, which man has contracted

by sin ; and which we find

was ever the intention of the divine law, as well of *Moses* as of *Christ*, to be *circumcised*, or put away.—The circumcision of the flesh was chiefly figurative of this spiritual circumcision of the heart and affections. And herein the prophet harmonizes most exactly with the apostle. St. *Paul* tells us, “ That is not circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.”—Both the *Jewish* and Christian sacrament of initiation into covenant with God, had the same view, as well as the same constituent parts, of an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace : The one did not supersede or vacate the other ; so that the external rite is ever to accompany, and to be accompanied with, its intended effect. And

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 28, 29.

this with very good reason, as St. Ambrose observes; “ because as the body, as well as the soul, hath vicious appetites and affections, which have need to be retrenched, and cut off, by repentance and mortification ; so likewise the impure thoughts of the heart are to be cleansed, as well as the filth of the flesh.” Wherefore, as the Jew might formerly say, that his salvation depended on this twofold circumcision ; so are we Christians to conclude with St. Peter, “ The like figure thereunto, even baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh [only], but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

17. *For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.*

18. *He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment.*

19. *Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

20. *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his Name.*

21. *He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and*

As they were required in the foregoing verse to be *no more stiff-necked*, or refractory and disobedient to the divine commands ; what here follows is urged as motives to enforce the duty and reasonableness of a faithful and persevering obedience ; and, being taken from the topics of God’s majesty, and his universal benignity, was a lesson to them, that they ought therefore not only to love and fear God, but, in imitation of his goodness, they were obliged to extend their love and charity to all mankind ; particularly to exercise a kind and tender regard towards strangers, because they themselves had been strangers in

*terrible things which thine eyes have seen.*

22. *Thy fathers went down into Egypt, with three-score and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.*

*the land of Egypt.*—And here we must not omit to add an important observation, and most suitable to this season, that one of the tremendous and divine titles, which God here assumes, namely, the *Lord of lords*, in order to confirm his own

authority, and the indispensable obligation of his law, is as expressly, by the Gospel, ascribed to our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; but withal in a manner that should make all those to tremble, who deny his Divinity, because so directly levelled against them; for of such it is spoken; “These shall make war “with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome “them: For he is *LORD OF LORDS*,” &c. And again, “He [the Word of God] hath on his vesture, “and on his thigh, a Name written, King of kings, “and *LORD OF LORDS*.”—Upon which a late expositor<sup>c</sup> faith very well, “That this Name, being “written upon the vesture and the body of Christ, may “intimate to us, that he is now, both in externals “and internals, truly the King of kings, and *Lord of lords*. He is externally so, because he hath “procured to himself that dignity by his works: “And he is *King of kings* by an internal merit; be-“cause as Word of God, he is also *God*; that is, “both by his divine nature, and mediatorial office; “by his intrinsical merit, as well as actions.—And “thus, his vesture will represent his flesh, his hu-“manity, and mediatorial works; and his thigh, his “most intrinsical nature or divinity, united to the “outward habit of his flesh.”—And whereas, as the same author farther observes, this divine attribute of supreme dominion [*Lord of Lords*], being inscribed on the thigh, denotes, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is

<sup>c</sup> Rev. xvii. 14.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid. xix. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Mr. Daubuz.

God,

God, by his eternal generation from the Father, the same name on his vesture shews, that the human nature is assumed into a participation of the Divine.

This remark, I say, and this proof of our blessed Lord's essential divinity, call for our more particular attention on this occaſon, and at this ſeafon, when we are celebrating his Nativity and Circumcifion; that ſo we may imprint, and ever keep fixed, in our minds, that he who was, as at this time, born of a woman, and circumcized as a ſinner, was nevertheless the LORD our God, the *God of gods*, and *King of kings*. To whom therefore, as moft due, be glory and dominion for ever. *Amen, Amen.*

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## The CIRCUMCISION of CHRIST

Second Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

COLOSSIANS, Chap. ii.

P R E F A C E.

**T**H E church having set before us, in her foregoing lessons for this day, the institution of circumcision; the obligation which it laid upon all that entered into it, of keeping the whole law; and the duties it required of fear, and love, and obedience to God; it might be objected, even by a Gentile (for such were the Colossians, as appears by the thirteenth verse of this chapter), and certainly was objected by the Jews; *Why then is circumcision set aside by the religion of Christ?* It was necessary therefore to answer this question, and to obviate so plausible an objection. To do this, our church hath chosen this chapter for her last proper lesson on this day, as it contains a resolution of the said question.

## The CIRCUMCISION of CHRIST.

Second Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer,

COLOSS. Chap. ii.

**F**OR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and

**S**T. Paul having received information, that attempts had been made by philosophers, and likewise by

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for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh:

2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7. Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

bring mankind to Christ, and thereby to salvation; whereas all adherence to the Mosaic rites, now antiquated by the Christian religion, and much more the sophisms of heathen philosophy, drew men away from Christ, and from the true means of eternal happiness. — To conciliate their favour and attention, he first expresses the great conflict or anxious concern he was under, lest they, and the church at *Laudicea*, should

by the Jews or judaizing Christians, and most probably by certain heretics (such as Cerinthus and the Gnostics, who blended the heathen philosophy, Christianity, and Judaism, together), to corrupt the true Christian faith, which had been planted at *Colosse* by *Epaphras*; the apostle sets himself in this chapter to dissuade the new converts from listening to the doctrines of such false teachers. These doctrines he calls *vain deceits* (ver. 8.) *Vain*, with respect to the Jewish observances, which, being but shadows of Christ, and of good things to come (*Heb. x. 1.*), were become *vain* and unprofitable, now the body or substance was present, and actually come (ver. 17.) But with respect both to Jewish opinions, and the maxims of heathen philosophy, he terms them also *deceits*; because they opposed the great end and design of the gospel, which was to

be

be perverted from the truth by such seducers; he then sets before and reminds them of the grand fundamental of the Christian religion, namely, the belief of the Holy TRINITY; a belief not only in God, but in God as a *Father*; and in *Jesus Christ* as his Son, and our *Lord*: Herein alluding not only to the form whereby they had been baptized [in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost], but more fully to the Creed, which he elsewhere calls, “the form of sound words<sup>a</sup>;” and on the profession of which they had been admitted into the church of Christ, and all the privileges of the Christian covenant—This great fundamental, which, in truth, is peculiar to the Christian religion, and therefore the main foundation and distinguishing character of it, he calls the *mystery of God*<sup>b</sup>; that is of the Godhead, or Divine Nature which, of all mysteries, is the greatest: The *full assurance of understanding* whereof is revealed and taught only by the Christian faith; and the *acknowledgment* of it is contained and professed in the Christian creed, which *acknowledges* God the [true God] to be FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; and *Jesus Christ*, in a special manner, to be our Lord.—This profession of the true faith he puts them in mind of (ver. 6.) and of their having been made members of Christ in baptism, which he calls being *rooted*<sup>c</sup> in him; of their having been *built up*, that is, catechised and instructed in that faith, and no other; of their having been *established*, to wit, by confirmation, in the faith which they had so learned, and been taught. This, I say, he minds them of, as the best preservative against the false and dangerous opinions of those seducers.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.      <sup>b</sup> Ver. 2.      <sup>c</sup> *Rooted* seems to refer to our union with God the Father by faith: *Built up*, or superstructed, to Christ; who is our foundation: *Established*, to the Holy Ghost, who bestows his manifold gifts in confirmation.

8. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

man; yea, not a titular god only, such as they esteemed *Apollo*, *Mercurius*, *Minerva*, and others, their first instructors in wisdom, but absolutely and essentially God. For so he immediately subjoins and affirms, that *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; that is, verily and substantially. Not that his Divinity became corporeal, or was turned into flesh and body; but that it was so united to that body, or human nature, which he assumed, as to dwell and inhabit therein, as God is said to dwell in his temple; for which reason Christ called his body “This temple<sup>a</sup>;” and as our bodies are called “The temples of the Holy Ghost<sup>b</sup>,” from his inhabitation therein. To shew the perfect fulness of the Godhead of Christ, and that it suffered no diminution or defect, by its union with, or so dwelling in, the human body of Christ, the apostle adds, That he is the *head*, i. e. the fountain, the principle, and original source, of *all principality and power*: Than which words nothing can more amply express and set forth that *fulness* of the Divine Nature, whereof our Lord *Jesus Christ* is possessed. And as St. *John* had said, chap. i. 16. “Of his fulness “ have all we received,” so here our apostle tells his

*After the tradition of men, and not after Christ.]* Observe here the antithesis or opposition which the apostle makes between men and Christ; between the philosophers, who taught wisdom among the Gentiles, as traditionally received from the several heads of their sects, such as *Pythagoras*, &c. who were but men; and Christ, who was God as well as

*Colossians*, “Ye are complete in him;” or rather, as it may be rendered, ye have been *filled*, or received a fulness, in him; a fulness, which neither the precepts of philosophy, nor institutions of the Jews, which, in themselves, are but *rudiments of this world*, could ever bestow; meaning, we may well presume, that great and peculiar privilege of the Christian religion, namely, the receiving the Holy Ghost in confirmation; which, by the antient fathers of the church, was called the completion of baptism<sup>f</sup>; being that ordinance which perfected the baptized person, and made him a *complete Christian*.

The

<sup>f</sup> *The completion of baptism.*] Chrism, or anointing with oil, was a ceremony used by the primitive church in the office of confirmation. Hence the ordinance itself is often called by that name. Of this the apostolical constitution is to be understood, where it saith, Τὸ μόρον βιβαίωσις τῆς ὁμολογίας\*. “The oil (*i. e.* confirmation) is the confirming of our profession;” that is, of the vow and promise which was made in baptism. Hence, by the author of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, it is called, τὴ μυρεῖ τελιωτικὴ χέισις †, “the perfective unction.”—For the same reason another † faith, “we have been redeemed by Christ; but the Holy Ghost gives us “the gift of spiritual wisdom, by which we are illuminated, edified, instructed, and consummated to perfection.

This unction (accompanied with the sign of the cross) is sometimes called *signaculum Domini*. So, St. Cyprian \*\* having spoken of baptism, he next orders the administering of confirmation, *signaculo Domini consummentur*, “Let them be consummated with the “Lord’s seal;” alluding most probably to St. Paul’s words, “Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ‡.” Hence the office was sometimes called *confignation*, the sealing. And as before confirmation the baptized persons were styled catechumens; after confirmation they were called [τελιωμένοι] perfected and consummated. To which that place in *Phil.* iii. 15 seems to allude,—“As many “of you as be perfect [τέλιοι].” And St. Ambrose’s words are very plain, both as to the order and effects of confirmation: *Post fontem supereft ut perfectio fiat, quando ad invocationem sacerdotis Spiritus Sanctus infunditur* §. “After the font it remains, that [the “office of] perfection should be performed, when at the invocation

\* Lib. iii. c. 17.      † Apud Hammond p. 102.      ‡ Euseb.  
Emess.      \*\* Ep. 73. ad Jubaian.      ‡ Eph. i. 13.      § De  
fac. L. iii. c. 2.

11. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.*

12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

13. *And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

14. *Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross:*

15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it,*

*the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; i. e. by the Christian circumcision, by which is generally understood baptism. But if we render the words more literally, IN THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST, it intimates still a plainer reason, why the manual and material circumcision is no longer necessary, even because Christians, and all true believers, were,*

“of the Bishop the Holy Ghost is conferred.”—See further, *Bingham* antiq. vol. iv. his account of confirmation. *Hammond* de confirmatione, in which he proves, that confirmation is not a mere appendage, or part of baptism; but the consummation and perfection of the person baptised.

The apostle now proceeds to answer the other objection made to his doctrine, and to Christianity in general; viz. that it set aside not only the heathen religion, and their philosophy, but the Jewish religion likewise, by annulling all further use and necessity of circumcision. This charge he admits; and shews that there was no further need of circumcision, now that Christ was come in person, and had suffered for us. Nevertheless he admits not, that circumcision is wholly abrogated, but rather sublimed and spiritualized from the mere external act to the more sacred and divine effects, for which it was intended;—from the circumcision made with hands, to the circumcision made without hands, even by the spirit of God, in putting off, not now a part of the body, but the whole body of the sins of

in effect, circumcised with, and *in*, Christ; *i. e.* when Christ himself was circumcised. For as here, and in many other passages of his epistles, our apostle (alluding to our mystical union, and strict membership, with Christ) tells us, we died *with* him, were buried *with* him, and raised *with* him; that is, died and were crucified, when he died on the cross; were buried, when he was buried; rose again to life, when he arose: So, in like manner, he asserts, that we are circumcised *in* his circumcision; *i. e.* when he was circumcised. Consequently there can remain no further need of our being circumcised with the circumcision made with hands, that is, the circumcision required by the law of *Moses*. But although the form, by Christ's own institution, be changed to baptism, yet the obligations and benefits are not changed, but rather more strongly enforced, by the Christian sacrament. We are therefore led to consider the spiritual effects and far greater benefits of baptism, in the several following respects: (1st) That it is a circumcision of much greater virtue and efficacy than the *Jewish*, as it *cuts off* all sin in us; separates us from *Adam*, the old stock, in which we were born; and engrafts us into Christ the new man. (2dly) That baptism is not only a kind of death, but of burial; we dying to sin, and the body of sin so dying in us, as to putrefy and consume away by degrees, like a dead body that is laid in the grave. (3dly) That baptism is a resurrection from sin to grace; from the life of nature, which is more truly a death, to the life of *Jesus*, who is the true and only life of man. (4thly) Baptism is a full and sufficient discharge from the penalty and curse of the law, and from whatever we owed to the justice of God as sinners and criminals; all acts of delinquency and guilt being remitted, and fully satisfied, by the sufferings and death of his Son. So that (5thly) it is a *blotting out* and cancelling of the hand-writing, that is, the charge or indictment exhibited against us by the law

of works, or first covenant (by which we were sentenced to die), and the penalty of wrath, malediction, and death, is repealed and cancelled. (6thly), Baptism is therefore a complete victory, and open *triumph*, over all the powers of hell, whose *principality* and tyrannical sway over man was not only *spoiled* and taken away by Christ, but *nailed to his cross* like a cancelled bond, and *openly shewed* to the world as a power from thenceforward abrogated and annulled.—Christ, by destroying sin disarmed the devil of his power; and, by abolishing the curse of the law, took away the strength of sin, and the sting of death. So that we may with joy and exultation sing that song of triumph,—“ Death is swallowed up in victory ! “ O death, where is thy sting ? O hell<sup>s</sup>, where is “ thy victory ? ”

16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbath-days :*

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come ; but the body is of Christ.*

Having shewn the non-necessity of the literal circumcision, and referred us Christians to that which is spiritual, and those saving effects thereof, which are now conveyed to us by the means of baptism, the apostle goes on to shew, that the other observances of the Jewish law, particularly the distinctions of meats and drinks, times and seasons, appointed by that law, are now set aside by the Christian religion ; and that for this obvious reason, because, as they were mere typical representations, and so *shadows* only, of the good things that were *to come*, they were to cease of course, when the substance which they prefigured was come to pass : That Christ was the very *body* or substance of such future blessings ; and he being now actually and in person come, there could be no reason for continuing such

*shadows* any longer. The continuance of them would be an over-act of unbelief, a virtual denial of Christ's being come in the flesh, and therefore in effect, a rejection of the Christian faith. For so St. John argues, " Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God ; and this is that spirit of Antichrist," &c. i Ep. ch. iv. 3.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind;*

19. *And not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

As the foregoing caution is more immediately directed to the Jewish converts, or judaizing Christians, this is levelled chiefly against the superstitious rites and customs of the Pagans, particularly their philosophers, and pretenders to wisdom, who first introduced the worship of angels under the title of inferior deities <sup>h</sup>, as the messengers of the supreme God to men; and of mediators on the part of

man, to convey and speed their requests to heaven. And this they did under the specious pretext of *humility*, as counting themselves unworthy to address the supreme Being immediately, and without the intercessions of such inferior advocates and mediators. But as this fond opinion and practice was founded

<sup>h</sup> By the Heathens called, *Dii minorum gentium, Deorum interpres*, and *Mετωνατοι*; i. e. Mediators and Advocates. The traditional stories of angels appearing to men, with messages from God, as related in the Old Testament, and from hence called "Αγγελοι", Angels, i. e. messengers, gave occasion to the superstitious worshiping of them. Afterwards, as some learned men tell us \*, *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and *Hesiod*, introduced a genealogy of the gods among the *Grecians*, imposed names upon each, assigned their functions and honours, and cloathed them in their several forms.—*Bishop Clayton*, in his chron. of the Hebrew Bible, p. 449.

\* See *Herod. Euterpe*, also *Euseb. præp. evang.*

only on their own invention, and wholly uncommanded of God, it was no true and genuine, but a false and imaginary, or (as the Apostle stiles it) a *voluntary humility*.—This, in all probability, betrayed men at first into that polytheism, or idolatrous worship of many gods, which soon overspread the heathen world; who, *not holding* the Head and Creator of all things, fell away by degrees from the belief and worship of the one, only true God.—The like superstitious opinion having crept in among the *Colossians*, our apostle warns them, in this epistle, against this false humility, as leading them to the like fatal consequence of forsaking Christ, who is *the Head* of the church, and of every member therein: That he (as God-man in one person, and not angels) is the one and only true Mediator between God and Man; and the only proper object of our worship and adoration. But if the apostle condemn these early and first symptoms of angel-worship, in the church of *Colosse*, what would he now say to the church of *Rome*, which is wholly infected with this very superstition? Nay, makes it not only a part of her devotions, but an article of her faith, and defends her practice with the same fond plea of *humility*?

20. *Wherfore if ye be dead<sup>1</sup> with Christ from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances.*

21. *(Touch not, taste not, handle not:*

22. *Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

Here the apostle taxes another superstition the church of *Colosse* was falling into, which was both Judaical and heathenish; namely, of certain abstinences from particular meats, &c. as unlawful.—The *Pagans*, particularly the *Pythagoreans*, forbade the use of flesh, fish, and other things, as criminal to eat, or so much as taste or touch.—The *Jews*

<sup>1</sup> Have died, *ἀπέσθατο*.

indeed,

23. *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

indeed, by the law of Moses, were commanded to abstain from some kinds of food : But now, by the death of Christ, and the consequent abolishment of circumcision, that law of carnal ordinances

was abrogated, and set aside ; so that Christians were no longer subject to such *rudiments of the world* ; “ the kingdom of God (as he elsewhere testifies) not “ being meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, “ and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in those “ things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and “ approved of men \*.”—He grants that such abstinences, as they carry the appearance of mortification and self-denial, have some *shew of wisdom*, and true religion ; and likewise of humility in *neglecting of the body*, and not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. But as they are conversant only about things in themselves perishable, and *taught only by the commandments and doctrines of men*, they are no essential parts, much less the end, of the Christian religion. And forasmuch as such *differences* of meats are rather forbidden than required thereby, they can be intitled to no *reward* ; but are rather a stratagem of the enemy to *beguile* us thereof.—There are indeed many well-meaning Christians, who, through a pious fear of pampering the body, or inflaming the passions, run into the contrary extreme of too rigorous severities, by which they impair the health and strength of the body, and enfeeble their spirits for the offices of devotion, as well as common life. For the sake of these it may not be unuseful to add a remark of one of the fathers on this passage (*in ver. 23*). “ These “ persons, saith he, by such austeries, may seem “ pious, abstemious, and neglecters of the body : But “ God hath honoured the body, and provided food “ for its necessary support ; that, being nourished and

\* Rom. xiv. 17. 18.

“ satisfied

“ satisfied therewith, it may preserve its constitution  
“ in vigour and health, and be enabled to exercise a  
“ free unconstrained dominion over its affections and  
“ appetites ; whereas these persons use not the body  
“ *in any honour* ; they defraud it of its due ; they  
“ destroy its native liberty and strength, and suffer it  
“ not to maintain a generous and voluntary com-  
“ mand over its own powers.”—Thus speaks *Theo-*  
*phylact* on ver. 23.—And St. *Bernard*, in his declining  
years, is said to have blamed himself for the too ri-  
gorous extremes wherewith he had treated his body  
in the former part of his life.

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## *The Second Sunday after CHRISTMAS.*

Proper Lessons for { M. P. ISAIAH, Chap. xli.  
E. P. —————— Chap. xlivi.

### P R E F A C E.

*A*N objection might arise from the appearance of Christ in the flesh, his birth and circumcision, that he was no more than man: And from some of the Scriptures appointed for this season, where he is proposed to us as the object of worship, we might be induced to think, that the Divinity ascribed to him was not real, but titular; and that the worship paid to him was only the effect of an extraordinary apotheosis, whereby he was deified, and advanced to the honour of Godhead, in the same manner, as the heathen deities were: or canonized, like the Romish Saints, to be an object of worship and adoration, which till then he was not intitled to.

To obviate, therefore, and prevent so great and fundamental an error in our faith, the church hath most pertinently and seasonably set before us, in these two most proper lessons, the essential distinction and difference between the heathen or Popish idols, and the true God; and then, by certain and undoubted properties and characters, which are here applied to the True God, and which, in other parts of Scripture, are as expressly attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ, while at the same time his real and proper humanity is likewise acknowledged and maintained; she leads us by the hand to make this plain inference with her, in ber

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her Athanasian Creed, "That our Lord JESUS CHRIST,  
"the Son of God, is GOD and man: God of the sub-  
"stance of his Father, begotten before the worlds; and  
"man of the substance of his mother, born in the world;  
"therefore perfect GOD and perfect MAN," &c. —  
And, that although he be God and Man, he is not Two,  
but One Christ.

We may further observe, how naturally these lessons introduce, and prepare us for, the Epiphany, or manifestation of Christ to the world: Yea, throughout the whole Epiphany season, even to Septuagesima Sunday, the church pursues the same uniform design of establishing our faith in the true nature of our Lord Jesus Christ; as will appear by the very proper choice she has made of her lessons out of this evangelical prophet; and her recounting to us, out of the gospels, such of his miracles as most eminently manifested forth his glory, and declare him to be as truly God, as he is truly Man.

In the first Lesson for this morning service, the SON is introduced as GOD, pleading his cause against the false Gods of the heathen; and challenging their idols to shew any certain marks of divinity, either in acts of universal providence, or of particular power and goodness in protecting their own votaries; — such as he alledges in behalf of his own divine power, with respect to his care and defence of his church, as well as his general providence towards all mankind.

In fine, the proper and essential marks of Divinity, here and elsewhere ascribed to the Son of God, whereby he is rightly and duly intitled to divine worship, exclude not only the heathen, but the Romish superstition; and, by the same rule, condemn all worship of creatures whatsoever. No saint or angel, however excellent in nature or station, can possibly be possessed of those characters of divinity which belong to Christ; and therefore cannot have any sort of adoration paid to them, without formal and downright Idolatry.

## Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

## I S A I A H, Chapter xli.

1. **K**EEP silence before me, O islands, and let the people renew their strength: let them come near: then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

**G**OD having in the foregoing chapter asserted his Almighty power, — in creating and governing the world; his irresistible justice towards his enemies; his goodness, his mercy, his truth, towards his faithful,

though afflicted servants; and produced them as so many irrefragable arguments of his Divinity; and all these glorious attributes being ascribed to Him, of whom St. John Baptist was to be the forerunner<sup>a</sup>; and having afterwards, by the holy Baptist; been expressly applied to our Lord Jesus, in that answer of his to the Jewish Sanhedrim, when they sent to inquire who and what he was<sup>b</sup>; he said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make strait the way of the LORD, as said the prophet Esaias;” it is evident, beyond contradiction, that the same JESUS CHRIST is the person, to whom all those divine attributes, characters, and names, do belong: That therefore we are compelled by the Christian verity, and as our church at this time more particularly instructs us, to believe and confess, that He is the LORD; the very same whom the prophet calls by the incommunicable name Jehovah; and styles him Our GOD. — And whereas the prophet does as expressly affirm, that all flesh shall see the glory of the LORD<sup>c</sup>; and that it shall be said to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God<sup>d</sup>; it follows, that this LORD our GOD was to become visible to the eyes of flesh, so as to become the object of our senites

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xl. 3. <sup>b</sup> John i. 23. <sup>c</sup> Chap. xl. 5. <sup>d</sup> Verse 9.

[*Digitu monstrari, et dicier, Hic est.*] And this was literally fulfilled, when he was pointed to by St. John. “ *John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and faith, Behold the Lamb of God.* ” — Wherefore we must necessarily conclude, that the right faith is, “ That the Second person in the Holy Trinity, the ever-blessed Son of God, who took mans nature upon him in the womb of the blessed Virgin ; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ ; is Very GOD, and Very MAN.” — From all which it follows, that the God, who, in the lesson now before us, is summoning the heathen nations to plead the cause of their Gods before him, offering them a fair tryal, a free liberty to speak in defence of the deities they worshiped, was (as we before observed) verily and indeed the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

*Let the people renew their strength ;*] that is to say, let them muster up the whole strength of their cause, and make the best plea they can. — God is an equitable judge ; he doth not seek to intimidate or browbeat the contrary party ; but allows all, even his adversaries, a fair hearing, and all the advantages they can reasonably desire.

2. *Who raised up<sup>c</sup> the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings ? be gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.*

Many expositors understand this of *Abraham*, who came from the east into Canaan : Others of *Cyrus* who might be called in some sense a righteous man, for the favour he shewed the Jews. And chap. xlvi. 13. it is said of him, that he was “ raised in righteousness.”

But here the word in the original<sup>d</sup> is not righteous man, but righteousness, in the abstract ; which is a

<sup>c</sup> *John i. 29.*   <sup>d</sup> *Heb. Righteousness*   <sup>e</sup> *פָּרָשָׁה Virtus ipsa. name*

name and character that cannot be applied to any mere man, and therefore must belong only to Christ whose name is the L O R D O U R R I G H T E O U S N E S S<sup>h</sup>. And by what follows, it plainly appears to be spoken of a person [called H I M,—before H I M.] And what person can sustain that character, and essential attribute of G O D, to wit, *righteousness* or perfection itself, but He who is of the same individual essence with the Father, even our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? He is righteousness itself, even the righteousness of God, and our righteousness, which no created being can possibly be.—In the same sense, and so applied by our church, is the word righteousness used by the *Psalmist*; who, speaking of Christ's advent in the flesh, hath this noble and sublime prosopopeia,—“ Mercy “ and truth are met together, righteousness and peace “ have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of “ the earth, and righteousness shall look down from “ heaven<sup>k</sup>.”

*Called him to his foot;]* i. e. to follow him: So the phrase is rendered, *Exod.* xi. 8. and in other places: It seems also to express a kind of subjection, and being at the command of another. In the New Testa-

<sup>h</sup> *Jer.* xxiii. 6.      <sup>k</sup> *Psalm lxxxv.* one of the proper *Psalms* for *Christmas-day*.

*Righteous man* [or Righteousness] *from the East.*] As *Righteousness* is one of the personal titles of Christ, so is he described also by the name of the *East*, *Zech.* iii. 8. The word *Tzemah*, there used, is by us indeed rendered, the *Branch*; but it more properly signifies the *East*, and is so rendered by the Septuagint version, *Αναλόγη*, and from thence cited by St. *Luke*, chap. i. 78. and applied to Christ; our *English* translation of which is, the *Day-spring*; but the margin hath it, the *Sun-rising*, or *East*. In *Isaiah* the *Hebrew* word for *East* is *Mizrah*, which, if taken for the title of the *Messiah*, as the other word, which in *Zechariah* is synonymous thereto, most certainly is, then the word *Righteousness* may be taken in an appellative signification, and denote the benefit of Christ's coming in the flesh; as if it were said;—Who introduced *righteousness*, or true virtue and innocence, in the world, from, or by, Him that is called the *East*? To this question the answer is given, verse 4—I the *L O R D*, &c.

ment it signifies discipleship; so St. Paul was brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*; and of *Mary* it is said, she sat at Jesus's feet and heard his word<sup>m</sup>. Thus Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, was *called to the foot* of his Father; that is, received his commission and authority from him.—So he professeth of himself, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do<sup>n</sup>.”—Again, “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father, which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.”—But to let us understand, that this inferiority was in point of office only, not in nature or power, our Lord guards against all error in so important an article of our faith, by adding,—“What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise; for the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that he himself doth<sup>p</sup>.”—This then is the very sense of the prophet’s expression; namely, that Christ, as to his person and office, is distinct from, and inferior to, the Father; but, as to his essence and attributes, he is one and the same with him.

*Gave the nations before him, &c.]* This is plainly parallel to that in the second Psalm, where this power is by commission given to the Son over the nations (or *Gentiles*), and their kings.—I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession: Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, &c.”—And what is the duty incumbent on us, but to follow the Psalmist’s advice, “To serve the Lord with fear, and to kiss the SON?”—To *kiss*; that is, to pay all outward homage, and bodily worship; “to put our trust in him;” that is, to pay him also eternal adoration, as the object of our faith and love.—This worship of the whole man, this devotion of body and soul, is

<sup>m</sup> Luke x. 39.<sup>n</sup> John v. 19.<sup>o</sup> Chap. xii. 49.<sup>p</sup> Chap. v. 19, 20.

due only to God; but is expressly commanded to be paid to JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God. How can he then be less than G O D?

*To his sword,—to his bow.]* The sword of Christ is the written word of God, which being “ a quick “ and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, “ piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and “ spirit,” cannot but be ever victorious; cannot but be ever terrible; for these are the words we must all be judged by at the last day.—The edges of this divine two-edged sword, are justice and mercy. However terrible it may appear to the conscience when alarmed by the terrors of the Lord, how deep soever it may wound, it is intended only for the salvation of mankind;—to destroy sin, not the sinner; to heal the soul by its wounds, not to kill. None shall ever perish by it, but those whom it cannot reclaim, and subdue to the obedience of Christ. Its wounds are the wounds of love, not of an enemy.—*His bow:* This is another weapon of this spiritual war; and may signify, 1st, That counsel of his will, and eternal purpose, whereby God purposed, before the foundation of the world, to redeem mankind; which will nothing shall be able to resist.—This *bow* is likewise bent for double execution, either to save, or to destroy; but will destroy none but such as refuse to be saved.—“ He hath “ bent his bow, saith the *Psalmist*, and made it “ ready.” But his arrows are ordained to slay none but such as will not turn.—2dly, The apostles, and preachers of the gospel, are also the *bows* of Christ (see *Zechariah*, chap. ix. 13.); from them, as from a well-drawn bow, his arrows fly to the mark. “ They are “ very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto “ him, even among the king’s enemies.”—Thus at length all mankind shall be given *as dust to the sword* of Christ, and *as driven stubble to his bow*; that is to say, shall all be humbled, and brought down,

either to their conversion, or utter confusion,—according to the reception his word shall meet with in their hearts.

*3. He pursued them, and passed<sup>t</sup> safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.*

presented as put to flight, and Christ as pursuing after him. He follows him through all the parts of the earth, even by ways, where his *feet*, that is, his ministers and messengers of salvation, had never gone before.—But how doth he *pursue and pass*? Is it in an hostile manner, to kill, and to destroy? No, but *in peace* (for so the *Hebrew* rightly expresses it)—He extends his conquests, not by bloodshed and war, but *by peace*; not as the *Alexanders* and *Cesars* of the world, but as *Samson*: Though the strongest among men, suffering himself to be bound, that we might be released; yea, submitting to die, that his people might live, and obtain *peace*. If in the loudest storms of life, we but look towards him, and listen to his voice, we shall still hear him say, as he once did to his affrighted disciples; “It is I, be not afraid.”

*4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD the first, and with the last, I am he.*

obstinacy, to mistake or gainsay.—*It is I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am he.* I Jesus, I the Saviour, am he, who have done these wonderful works of mercy and power. I am JEHOVAH, the Lord and

This foreshews not only the swift and irresistible progress of the gospel, but likewise the extraordinary method, whereby it should be propagated.—Man is re-

And who art thou, O blessed Saviour and Preserver of men, who hast wrought and done all this?—Thy answer to this important question is too plain to leave room for any thing but prejudice, and inveterate

<sup>t</sup> *Heb.* in peace.

<sup>u</sup> *Mat.* xiv. 27.

Creator of heaven and earth; the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the First and the last.—The latter title our Lord expressly assumes to himself in the *Revelations*; and indeed it peculiarly belongs to him, and to none other. He is *First*, as he is truly GOD; he is *Last*, as he is truly Man. Were he not truly God by nature, he could not be truly called *First*. And as he became man, yea, was set in the lowest rank of men, the very scorn and outcast of the people, even a worm; and, in comparison of others, and in outward appearance, no man; he might well be called the *Last*.—In the prophet's expression [WITH the *last*] there seems indeed, to be insinuated our Lord's other name, *Immanuel*, or God WITH us; the most high G O D, the *First* and Supreme of all beings, with man, the *last* and lowest of all rational creatures; yea, through sin, the lowest and *last* of all created beings.

*Calling the generations from the beginning.]* This also is the peculiar office and work of Christ. He it was preached the gospel to *Adam*, to the old world, to *Abraham*, to the children of *Israel* in *Egypt*, in the wilderness, &c. as well as afterwards to us his people of the new law.—Thus hath he *called the generations from the beginning*, and still continues to call. Thus he not only existed before he was born of the Virgin, but had the same care of his church from the beginning of the world, as he hath since he was made flesh.—In this respect also it is true, that he is *First*, and *with the last*; extending his mercy, and the tenders of salvation, to all men in all ages, from the *first*, generations of men, to the *last* that shall ever be.

The coming of Christ had

5. *The isles saw it, and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.*

6. *They helped every one his neighbour, and every one*

a twofold effect upon the world, directly contrary the one to the other; to wit, peace, and war:—Peace on earth (according to the angels song)—peace to the sons

said to his brother, Be of good courage.

7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheith with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved.

" against her mother," &c.—This opposition, which the prophets and our Lord foretold the gospel should meet with from ill men, was verified on its first publication; for immediately, as was foretold, " The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ \*."—But particularly the makers of shrines for the heathen deities, whose craft was in danger of being set at nought, made no small stir about this way. The banding of these men against the progress of Christianity, and encouraging each other in their opposition, is here foreshewn by the prophet; and was literally fulfilled in what we read of Demetrius, and his craftsmen, *Acts* xix. 23, &c.—No wonder such men should be enemies to the gospel, whose interest and occupation, as well as principles, it opposes, and is calculated to destroy.

8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9. Thou, whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and laid unto thee, Thou art my

sons of peace, the humble and well-disposed; but war and division among the children of disobedience, according to our Lord's own saying; " Think not that I am come to send peace upon earth, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter

The person here speaking we may conceive to be the second in the Holy Trinity, or the Godhead of the Son to his manhood; as is frequent in this prophet; see chap. xliv. 22, &c. where the *Logos*, or Son of God, speaks to the *Messiah*, as Son of man.

\* Mat. x. 34, 35.

\* *Psalm* ii. and *Acts* iv. 26.

The

*Servant, I have chosen thee,  
and not cast thee away.*

10. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee : be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

11. *Behold all they that were incensed against thee, shall be ashamed and confounded : they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish.*

12. *Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee : they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.*

13. *For I the L O R D thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.*

14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee, saith the L O R D, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.*

The reason why the *Messiah* is called *Israel* and *Jacob*, is elsewhere explained (see preface to chap. xliv.): And what is said to the *Messiah*, as man, is to be understood as spoken to all who are true members of him. So that all such may with confidence apply to themselves all the endearing expressions of love, all the assurances of favour and protection, all the promises of grace and mercy, which are here made to the Mediator, as their head and principal.—Every true believer in *Jesus* may with comfort and assurance, place all these glorious privileges and blessings to his own account ; and say, in the words of St. Paul, “ All are ours ; ” and we are Christ’s, and “ Christ is God’s.” 1Cor. iii.

Note we also, for the further confirmation of our faith in *Jesus*, that, after exposing the vanity and folly of those who seek for happiness and security from

their idols, from the works of their own hands, their own schemes and projects, God here declares, that he hath chosen the *Messiah* as the only sure and adequate means for saving mankind, and bringing us to true felicity.—The method which God himself hath schemed for our salvation, must needs be safe and sure ; and there cannot, under heaven, be any other,

for so we are assured, there is no other name given, whereby we can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15. *Bebold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument, having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.*

16. *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the L O R D ; and shalt glory in the Holy one of Israel.*

17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the L O R D will bear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*

18. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.*

19. *I will plant in the wilderness, the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree: I will set in the desert the fir-tree and the pine, and the box-tree together:*

20. *That they may see, and know, and consider, and*

The foregoing seven verses represented the *Messiah* in his state of humiliation, not only as despised and rejected of men, but persecuted and opposed; not only as taken from the ends of the earth, mean and lowly in condition and appearance, but as a servant, yea, a worm. From hence, to the end of the lesson, his state of exaltation is described: 1st, As invested with supreme power over all flesh;—to punish and chastise the wicked; to protect and save the poor and needy, the humble and meek believer: 2dly, As dispensing acts of mercy to the penitent, who are represented as thirsting after righteousness,—seeking water, and having none, i. e. no comfort or refreshment in this world; which therefore the Psalmist rightly calls, “a barren and dry land, where no water is.”—To these he will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of valleys; that is to say, abundant supplies of grace, the upper and nether springs; blessings from on high; blessings in his church

*understand together, that the band of the L O R D hath done this, and the Holy one of Israel hath created it.*

church on earth; blessings to the great ones *in high places*; blessings to those in low degree.—He will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of

water; that is, will turn our very sorrows and afflictions into blessings. By an happy transmutation, an holy metamorphosis, a new creation, he will convert our evil into good, our very sins into virtues, our troubles into comforts, and real benefits,—In this wilderness of the world, this “land of trouble and anguish,” so irrigated by his grace, will he plant his church.—Her faithful members (here called trees, and elsewhere, “trees of the Lord’s planting; trees of righteousness”) he compares to the cedar, the *shittah*, the *myrtle*, the oil-tree, &c. trees, although not all equally strait and tall, yet all flourishing and ever-green: 3dly, His state of exaltation displays itself in acts of justice, executing judgment on all who lift up themselves in pride, and opposition against him, and his gospel. These mountains he will thresh, and bring low; these hills he will make as chaff; he will winnow and fan them as corn, to separate the chaff from the good grain; and the wicked shall be carried away, as chaff is scattered by a whirlwind.

21. *Produce your cause, saith the L O R D ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.*

Here begins the challenge between Christ and the heathen gods: And to ascertain to us who the party challenging is, he is first stiled by the incomunicable Name

*Jehovah*, to assert his real Godhead; and then, by the title more peculiarly belonging to himself, the King of Jacob.—See David’s Hymn to Christ, *Ps. xlvi.* where the royal prophet, though himself a king, calls the *Messiah*, by way of eminence, THE KING.

In innumerable other places, he is styled the *King of Israel, of Zion, of the Jews, King of the earth,* yea, absolutely GOD, *Thy throne, O God, &c.* as St. Paul applies it expressly to Christ, Heb. i. 8. as cited from Psalm xlvi. 6.

*22. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.*

*23. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.*

*24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.*

what is called natural *evil*; that is, a power over nature, to direct or over-rule its operations and effects. These two undoubted and self-evident proofs of a real and essential Divinity, (namely, veracity, or omniscient truth; omnipotence, or almighty power) he calls on the heathen deities to produce.—Then, as it were waiting for their answer, and receiving none, he concludes, *Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought.*—Behold, that is, see, yourselves, and ye cannot but be convinced, that at best ye are but creatures; and so originally made out of *nothing*. And as to your divinity, it is owing merely to the vain superstition and ignorance of foolish men, whose original also was *nothing*;

Admire we the wonderful condescension of Christ! He that is the judge of all the earth, submits to be judged; he that afterwards submitted to a trial, before an earthly judge, Pontius Pilate, as a man, to prove his innocence, is here content to stand a trial as God, to prove his Divinity.—The proof, on which he places the issue of the trial, is truth and power,—Truth, to know all things that ever have been, are, or shall be; all times and facts past, present, and to come: A power absolute and uncontroled; to do whatever pleafeth him, either *good or evil*,—not surely moral, but

*nothing; and therefore your godships, and the worship you usurp, are a work of nought.*—And whosoever chooseth you for his gods, maketh himself *an abomination*, and his devotions impious and profane;—not a sacrifice or means to propitiate divine justice, but a sacrilege to provoke it.

25. *I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall be call upon my Name, and he shall come upon princes, as upon morter, and as the potter treadeth clay.*

Having baffled, and put to silence, all false pretenders to divinity, and convicted them of impotence and ignorance, consequently of their being no Gods, the *Messiah* proceeds to prove his own title to Divinty by an instance, which nothing but Divine Knowledge could

foresee, and Almighty power could effect. The fact itself, at the time of prediction, was not only so remote in the womb of futurity, being about two hundred years before it was accomplished, and therefore beyond the reach of any created understanding to foreknow; but is expressed in terms so obscure, and seemingly so impossible, that nothing less than infinite power could bring to pass.—The particular fact is the birth and conquests of *Cyrus*, and the founding the *Perian* empire by him.—His birth is foretold in such ambiguous words, as no limited understanding could unriddle before it happened. He is described as coming both from the *north*, and from the *east*.—Now this was verified in him, as his father was a *Perian*, and his mother a *Median*, *Media* lying northward of *Babylon*, and *Peria* to the east.—But this also was a type of Christ, who by his Father was from heaven, the true orient, and region of light: By his mother was from the earth, the region of darkness in comparison of heaven, as the northern parts of the earth are with respect of the east, whence arise the light, and the sun.

The conquests of *Cyrus* are described, by *coming upon princes as morter, and as the potter treadeth clay*; which is as much as to say, they should not be able to resist him.—This also hath been fulfilled by the Captain of our salvation, of whom *Cyrus* was the type; and will still be more gloriously fulfilled over all the principalities and powers of earth and hell.—Of *Cyrus* it is here said in the prophecy, *He shall call upon my Name*:—And that *Cyrus* did make publick profession of that prince, by *Ezra*, chap. i. 2. but that profession the *Messiah*, in the prediction, assumes to himself; for he saith, *He shall call upon my Name*.—This then is a further argument of our Lord's proper Divinity, prayer to him, and prayer to the Father, being one and the same thing, because he and the Father are one and the same GOD, according to his own saying, I and the Father are one [*Unum sumus*;] and again, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

26. *Who bath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before time, that we may say, He is righteous?* yea, there is none that *beweweth*, yea there is none that *declareth*, yea, there is none that *beareth your words*.

On a prediction of so extraordinary a nature, the event whereof was not to happen till many ages afterwards; an event which he alone foresaw, and had determined; for (as St. John speaks of him on a like contingency) “He himself knew what he would do;” our Lord, with a kind of insultation, demands of the idols, which of them could produce such tokens of divinity?—We, who live in these last ages of the world, we who have seen the accomplishment of this prophecy, both in the type and the prototype, in *Cyrus* and in *Christ*, are witnesses of the truth thereof; and may well say of him, who *declared* the same *from the beginning, and before time*, not only that *he is righteous*, a true speaker, and faithful fulfiller of his word; but that such knowledge,

ledge, and such power, are evident proofs of his true and essential Divinity.

27. *The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.*

*The first, &c.]* allusive, perhaps, to what is said, verse 4. *I the first, &c.* or more probably it meaneth God the FATHER, or First person in the Holy Trinity, calling to *Zion*, or his church,

to *behold* these vain pretenders to divinity, as confuted and confounded; to triumph over them likewise, and despise them. And as a further encouragement, he promises to send them a SON to *bring good tidings*, which shall be to them and to all people; to wit, the gospel.—This also is come to pass: This happy accomplishment we are now celebrating with his church, at this joyful season; and may the memorial of it never cease from among us!

28. *For I beheld, and there was no man, even amongst them, and there was no counsellor, that when I asked of them, could answer a word.*

29. *Behold, they are all vanity, their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.*

*For I beheld, &c.]* For, in the original, is *And*, and should have been so rendered, this being the drawing up of the verdict against the idols, who neither could *answer a word* to the charge, nor had any counsellor to plead their cause for them. On the issue therefore of the whole dispute, God the Father is introduced as the proper judge, and pronouncing the sentence against all such false objects of worship, that *they are all vanity, &c.*—Note we here, that God the FATHER, even the God whom heretics (though by a depraved distinction) allow to be God supreme, passes the sentence on behalf of his Son's Divinity, and condemns all that stand in competition with him, as *vanity*, and *things of nought*. How much more will he revenge the impiety of those who deny the Godhead of his only

only Son, and are not afraid to debase his real Divinity to a level with his creatures, which are *works of nothing*?—Our wisdom, therefore, and our salvation, must consist in following the Psalmist's advice; “Kiss the SON, lest he [the FATHER] be angry, “and so ye perish from the right way. Blessed are “all they that put their trust in him.”

We cannot better conclude these remarks on our lesson, than with St. *Augustine's* words; “Let us read “in the prophets the predictions concerning *Jesus Christ* and his church: Let us now see with our “eyes their happy accomplishment; and let us believe that what is not yet come to pass, will as certainly be accomplished; to wit, the resurrection “from the dead, and the last judgment.—*Prædicta lege, completa cerne, complenda collige.*”

\* *Psalm ii.*

*The*

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*The Second Sunday after CHRISTMAS-DAY.*

The Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Ch. xliii.

P R E F A C E.

**O**UR morning lesson concluding with a declaration of the vanity and utter insufficiency of men and idols [that is, either by human wisdom and learning, or by all the arts of superstition and false religion] to propitiate the divine justice, and effect the redemption of mankind; and the succeeding chapter (to wit the xliii.) having proposed Christ as the only sufficient instrument and author of our salvation, and described him in his twofold state, first, as MAN, conversing with men; his gentle, meek, and humble appearance; that he should not cry, nor lift up his voice to be heard in the street, nor break the bruised reed; next, in his DIVINE Nature, as the creator of heaven and earth, and then; having represented him as making the first tender of salvation to his own people the Jews, and their rejection of him;

The present chapter, as a proper sequel to our morning lesson, proceeds to celebrate the far greater success which his gospel would find among the Gentiles: Asserts his real and essential Divinity in the strongest terms: And concludes with a prophecy of the Jews rejection, and the cause of it.

*Second*

## Second SUNDAY after CHRISTMAS.

First Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xliii.

1. **B**UT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.

2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

3. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy<sup>a</sup> life.

Should not fear, nor be dismayed; that indeed it should be impossible for any enemies to prevail against him;

**B**UT now, &c.] Here, as it were, turning from Israel according to the flesh, to the Israel of God, the true Jacob, to him that should be despised of men, and rejected of his own people; the Lord uses many endearing expressions of consolation and encouragement to fortify him against the many oppositions he was to meet with in the execution and course of his ministry. In which we may observe, 1st, The amazing tenderness and benignity of God towards mankind in sending his Son to save us; the no less admirable love of that Son in coming to redeem a lost world, notwithstanding all the indignities, he was to suffer, even from those he came to save. 2dly, The promises of God, that no attempts of men or devils should hurt him; that therefore he

<sup>a</sup> Or, as our Margin renders it, thy person.

because

because the LOR D his God, the Holy one of *Israe l*, that is, God himself, the essential Divinity of the WORD and Son of God, should be inseparably united to him ; that the *Messiah* should be God as well as man ; — man, to suffer [to pass through fire and water] ; but God, to satisfy the divine justice as well as conquer all enemies.—That God, that is to say, the God-head, should be in Christ, reconciling the world to himself ; that the *Messiah* would be God manifested in the flesh. 3. That whatever privileges, protection, or mercies, are here or elsewhere promised to the *Messiah*, are in him promised to, and entailed on, the Church : So that, if Christ be with us, and we in Christ, we become intitled to all the blessings settled on him, her head and principal. As the *Messiah* derived all the efficacy and merit of what he did or suffered from the power of the Divinity united to the humanity in his sacred person, so all our graces, and all our interest in God, are conveyed to us through Christ ; that is, by virtue of our union with him. So that whatever person or church hold not this faith of Christ's essential Divinity, they are none of his, and consequently not united to God. They are aliens from the commonwealth of *Israe l*, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, because (and it is the Apostle's inference <sup>b</sup>) they are without Christ. 4thly, A present mercy is instanced as a pledge and security of the truths of the foregoing promises. — *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, &c.*] that is to save the kingdom of *Israe l* from the power of *Sennacherib*, an enemy too powerful for them to cope with, and who had invaded their country, I called him off, and threw the *Ethiopian* into his hands as a ransom to divert the storm from *Hezekiah* (the emblem of Christ), and from his people, the emblem of the Church <sup>c</sup>. — At another time *Egypt* and *Seba*

<sup>b</sup> *Eph.* ii. 12. <sup>c</sup> This prophecy bears date by computation about two years after that deliverance. See the chronological index to the Bible.

had been given up by the divine justice as a kind of propitiatory sacrifice and atonement instead of *Israel*.—Such lately received mercies, and all past favours of God towards his people, are to be accepted as an earnest of his future protection, and should assure the church and all her faithful members, that her enemies shall never prevail against her; that they shall be rather given up to destruction in lieu of her; their fall shall prove her reprieve and safety.

5. *Fear not, for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west.*

6. *I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.*

7. *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him.*

nature of Christ is, as it is said, *I have formed him, yea, I have made him*) as in itself unequal to so great a work.—The first encouragement is the personal union of the divine nature to the human, —*Fear not, for I am with thee*; i. e. I, the WORD (here speaking to thee), I, the SON OF GOD, I, JEHOVAH, the Almighty God, *am with thee*.—Yea, so intimate is the hypostatic union of the two natures, that the *seed* of the one is called the *sons* and *daughters* of the other. — *I will bring thy seed*, saith the *Logos*, *from the east, &c.* — *I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the Earth.*—The children of the regeneration are

It is for our instruction and admonition, as well as comfort, that the divine nature of Christ is so often introduced, and particularly in this place, as speaking to, and encouraging the humanity not to fear.—The work of our Redemption was not only to be a conflict with all the powers of darkness, and every enemy of man, but a contest with infinite justice, a wrestling, like that of *Jacob*, with God himself. Well then might a Creature be daunted (for so the human

so often called in Scripture the *seed*<sup>d</sup> of Christ, as fully verifies and also explains the title given him of *everlasting Father*<sup>e</sup>. Hence the offspring so begotten of him, are here described as *called by his name*; it being the privilege of children to be called after their father's name. And to shew the manner as well as end of the new birth, it is added, *I have created him for my glory.* So that our regeneration or new birth in baptism is a new creation, and the true end thereof is the *glory* of him that created us; or, as the apostle hath described it<sup>f</sup>, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus "unto good works." We may also presume, that the whole process of this new creation is intimated to us in these words in the prophet, — *I have created,—formed,—and made.* — Which are words not so synonymous, as to mean one only act, but contain in them the several acts and operations of the ever blessed Trinity in effecting the redemption of mankind. Creation, or giving being to the new man, is the office or act of the FATHER; the framing or modelling in the image of him that created us is the act of the SON, who is himself the express image of the FATHER; the perfecting and completing our renovation, so as to cause us to retain that divine similitude, is the office of the HOLY GHOST. — The son indeed, who here speaks in the prophet, seems to speak in his own person only; but this interferes not with the foregoing remark. Christ, being the messenger of the covenant, speaks on the behalf of the whole Trinity; and whereas he is the same God with the Father and Holy Spirit, he may very properly speak (as is not unusual in other places) in the first pronoun personal, and say, I, I, I; as he does sometimes say, *I, even I, am He, &c.* — In a word, the sense and application of the whole is contained in those words and exhortation of the apostle<sup>g</sup> — "That ye put off, concerning the "former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt

<sup>d</sup> See *Isaiah* liii. 10, &c.    <sup>e</sup> *Isaiah* ix. 10:    <sup>f</sup> *Ephes.* ii. 10.

<sup>g</sup> *Ephes.* iv. 22, 23, 24.

" according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in  
 " the spirit of your mind : And that ye put on the  
 " new man, which after God is created in righteous-  
 " ness, and true holiness."

*8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.*

Some understand this of the blind and deaf idols, who had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not. And these are called a *people*, as the beasts of the fields and dragons are (in ver. 20, 21.) called a *people*. But it may also mean the worshipers of such idols. These had eyes, that is, the light of reason (which is one of the eyes of the mind) ; and ears, that is, capacity sufficient to learn and understand, that idols were but the work, and creatures, and therefore could not be the creators, of man. Nevertheless, to this truth they were both *deaf* and *blind*: *Blind*, to the plain evidences of God's eternal power and godhead from the works of the creation ; and *deaf*, to the voice of their own reason, and common sense. But, alas ! are there not too many in these our days, even under the light and sound of the gospel, as *blind*, and as *deaf*, as those idols, or their stupid worshipers ? For not only they, who make and worship such senseless idols are like unto them ; but all they also who live without Christ, and consequently without God, in the world, are both *blind* and *deaf*.

*9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witness, that they may be justified: or let them bear and say, It is truth.*

Here the *Messiah* summons the *nations*, or whole Gentile world, and challenges them to produce the oracles of their gods, which they so much boasted of, and confided in, in evidence of their divinity, and to justify their religion. — He calls upon them, or any among them,

10. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*

11. *I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Saviour.*

12. *I have declared, and have saved, and I have shew-ed, when there was no strange God among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.*

13. *Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work and who shall lett it?*

to declare this; that is, to give the reason of the most obvious things, the true state of things immediately present, and then before their eyes; or a just detail of former things which were past and gone. — But if they were not able to declare and give a just account of such things as these, how much less able were they to declare things to come, and penetrate into the remote events of futurity? — In our morning lesson we met with a challenge and contest of Christ somewhat parallel to this: But there the dispute is rather with the idols or false Gods themselves: here with their votaries and worshipers, even all the nations of the Gentile world.—These he here challenges to bring forth their witnesses, to prove the pretended divinity of their idols; or else to submit to and confess the truth, that they were no gods.—In confirmation of his own divinity, he produces not only facts (in the forecited instances, ver. 2. to ver. 8.), but his witnesses also to support the truth of those facts, and to prove, that he is God, and that beside or without him there is no Saviour; yea, that he was God from all eternity; *Before the day was, I am he.* Before time itself had a beginning, he pre-existed, and had a being.

“ In the beginning was the Word, and [therefore] the Word was God.” — The witnesses to the Divinity of this Word are chiefly his apostles, and their writings, for to them he said, “ You shall be my witnesses unto

<sup>b</sup> John i. 1.

"the uttermost part of the earth!" — Next, those holy men and women, who were martyrs and confessors in the first ages of christianity, or have ever since laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus; yea, all those who by a holy life and conversation, conformable to his gospel, do still bear witness to the truth and power of the doctrine of Christ.

14. *Thus saith the Lord your redeemer, the Holy one of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.*

15. *I am the L O R D your holy one, the Creator of Israel, your King.*

Here the Lord turns again to his own people, and appeals to them as eye-witnesses of his wonderful works, both of mercies towards them, and of vengeance on their enemies. — And this will appear the more plainly, if we lay the emphasis and stress on the word *your*, so often repeated in these two verses,—*your Redeemer,—your sake,—your Holy one,—your King.* — O how sweet to an humble soul, who ponders these things in his heart, are these appropriating terms! — The great God says not, you are mine by redemption, and therefore my purchase and property; I am your King, and therefore you are my subjects and vassals; — but, I am *your* Redeemer, *your* holy One, *your* King.—You have a right and title to me, as I have to you. Are you mine? So am I yours; *your* Redeemer, to deliver you from your enemies; *your* King to protect and defend you; *your* Holy one, to sanctify and cleanse you from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that ye may be partakers of my holiness, and receive the inheritance among them that are sanctified through Faith in me. — *For your sake I have sent to Babylon, &c.* This he did for his antient people: He sent his prophets to comfort them there: Then sent his servant *Cyrus* to deliver them from thence, and restore them to their own land. But

<sup>1</sup> *Act* i. 8. <sup>2</sup> *Isa.* xlvi. 8.

these were types and shadows only of what his love has done for us Christians. To us God has sent his Son, his only Son ; sent him into the world, this capital of *Satan*, whereof *Babylon* was the naked figure ; sent him *for our sake*, not only to bring down *nobles*, and *Chaldeans*, whose *cry* and *boast* is *in their ships*, and *secular strength* ; but to bring down the power of our spiritual enemies, and to rescue our souls from the captivity of *Satan* and sin. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable mercy, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever !

16. *Thus saith the L O R D, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.*

17. *Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power ; They shall lie down together, they shall not rise : they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

Here he reminds them of their redemption from the bondage of *Egypt*, the wonderful passage he opened through the *Red-sea* for their escape ; the no less wonderful path he made through the waters of *Jordan*, to put them in possession of the promised inheritance. These miracles he wrought for his antient people the children of *Israel*, the sons of *Jacob* ; but

for us, whom he has chosen to be his *own* children, his own sons and daughters<sup>1</sup>, and *called* (as fathers do their own legitimate issue) *by his own name* [Christians], he has opened a way for our deliverance from a worse bondage, through a red-sea of his own blood : For us also he hath *made a path in the mighty waters*, even the waters of baptism ; yea through the mighty waters of persecution, to give us possession of a better inheritance, even the heavenly *Canaan*, the true land of the living, the regions of light and immortality. But we must not think to be saved all at once from our enemies ; nor to rest and be happy at once, even because we cannot be perfect at once. We too, as well as they, have

<sup>1</sup> See ver. 6, 7.

our *red-seas* and *mighty waters* to pass : But that is not all. The red-sea indeed drowned the *Egyptians*, and let *Israel* go through ; but then it brought them into a wilderness to prove and to try them. It drowned their enemies, but did not subdue the stubbornness of their hearts. — Next, *Jordan* made way for them into *Canaan's* land ; but here they met with Sons of *Anak*, sore battles and wars. This too is our case ; even after our redemption, after baptism, wars and tribulations abide us. Our state for a while is militant before we can expect to triumph. But triumph we shall, if we follow the captain of our salvation to the end. *He bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power*, that is, all the enemy's force, that we may obtain the more complete victory through him that strengtheneth us. In him, and the power of his might, we shall be more than conquerors.—And how did he conquer ? Even by dying, and then lying down in his grave. Then it was that the power of the enemy was broken : They were brought down, yea, they did *lie down*, even all of them *together*, in that grave of Christ ; but *they shall not rise*, as he arose, to new life and power (see ch. xxvi. 14.). Their power was then extinct, as fire is extinguished when buried under earth. And as *tow* is quenched by a puff of wind, so the flame of divine wrath, which these enemies of our soul had kindled against us, was put out by the breath of redeeming mercy.—Nor can any one now be overcome, and perish, but he that turns his back in the day of battle, or deserts his colours, the cross and banner of Christ.

18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

19. Behold I will do a new thing : now it shall spring forth, shall ye not

In comparison of these unspeakable mercies, and deliverances from the power of sin and *Satan*, all those former acts of temporal deliverances from *Egypt*, *Babylon*, &c. seem too inconsiderable

*know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.*

20. *The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

21. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.*

gross all our joy, our gratulations and praise. It is true, we Christians also have a *wilderness*, a red-sea, and our *rivers* to pass through; but this our *wilderness*, the world, is now made passable; a plain and easy way through it is marked out by the steps of our dear Redeemer, and his noble army of martyrs, saints and confessors. Our *waters* are made the waters of life by his death: The *waters* of baptism admit us into his house here; and the *waters* of sufferings and persecutions into his house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.—Those, who by nature were no better than the *beasts of the field*, fierce as *dragons*, or lovers of darkness like the *owls*, when they drink of these *waters* of life, shall quite change their nature, and rejoice to honour him, who has created them anew in righteousness and true holiness.

22. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused*

able to be remembred, or called to mind. This new scene of eternal salvation, like the rising sun, obscures, and as it were extinguishes, those lesser lights.—This prophecy hath been fulfilled in our days. The Sun of righteousness, as at this time, arising with healing in his wings, calls off our attention from those former things, and should en-

Here our Lord complains of the Jews as more stupid than the *Heathens* (whom they counted as *beasts*, &c. ver. 20.): That they had not received him, though he was their *Messiah*, their Saviour and Redeemer, who blotteth out their transgressions, ver. 25. Hence therefore, where

*thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

where it is said, *Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast been weary of me, thou hast not brought me, &c.* the word **ME** is to be taken in a restrictive emphatic sense, that they had not received or acknowledged the Son of God, who here speaks as their Lord, and their God. In like manner as the same Lord speaks in *Axos* v. 25.

“ Have ye offered to **ME** sacrifices for forty years in “ the wilderness?” Or, as it is more strongly said in those words of *Zechary* vii. 5. “ Did ye at all fast to “ **ME**, even to me?”--The truth is, the *Jews*, after their return from the *Babylonish* captivity, were indeed thoroughly cured of their idolatry, or the worship of many gods; but then they ran into the contrary extreme, of what we now call Deism. They so strictly maintained the unity of God, that they rejected the belief of all plurality in the divine essence, and consequently excluded the Second Person of the holy Trinity out of their creed and worship. -- It is true they owned the name, and expected the coming, of the *Messiah*; but they believed and expected him only as a prophet, or a temporal prince, and deliverer from their temporal, not spiritual, enemies; as a Saviour from their worldly oppressions, not from their sins. For this reason, as it is said in our lesson, they *brought HIM not the small cattle of their burnt-offerings*, nor *honoured HIM with their sacrifices, &c.* that is, they did not pay him divine worship; but made him *serve with their sins*, and *wearied him with their iniquities*; that is, they looked upon him as a creature only, and not their Creator; as a servant only, or mere instrument in the hand of God, to rescue them from the yoke of their servitude; yea, were so far from repenting of this their sin of unbelief, that they treated him

as a mean contemptible person; they not only *wearied* his patience *with their iniquities*, but persecuted, reviled, and condemned him to a shameful death, for asserting his divine nature, and affirming to them, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one.—This they counted blasphemy, and sought to stone him; see *John* x. 33. For this their council pronounced him guilty of death, and spit upon him; see *Matt.* xxvii. 65, 66, 67.—Those also who make use of religion as a cloak to carry on any sinister ends, or their own secular interests, or who put on the disguise of an extraordinary sanctity to gain the applause and praise of men, these may too truly be said to make God *serve with their sins*. Yea, all that charge the blessed spirit with their wild enthusiastic notions and opinions; all that hold the truth in unrighteousness, that call themselves Christians, and pretend to bear the name of Christ, without departing from Iniquity; are guilty of this outrage against the Most High God.—Such kind of hypocrisy may well be deemed more impious than downright infidelity, as it seems a less indignity to deny the very being of God, than to acknowledge his being, and yet to treat him as a tool and pander to our lusts, to make him a slave to serve and assist us in our sins.—To make the most holy God the author and abettor of evil, is the most inexcusable and most detestable atheism.

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

26. *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*

27. *Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.*

As if he had said; Though you have treated me so unworthily; though you reject me as Son of man; though you disown my Divinity as Son of God, and deny me the homage due of divine worship, as one of the Persons in the most sacred and undivided Trinity; yet *I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, &c.*—Observe

28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

we the repetition I, even I; I the Son of God, I the Son of man, am he, that alone can save you:—There is no other Saviour beside me:

There is no other way to

escape eternal misery but by remission of sins; and there is none in heaven or earth that can obtain that remission for you but me.—O the astonishing ingratitude and stupidity of man! O the amazing philanthropy and loving kindness of God the Saviour toward man! How tenderly does he woe and court us to accept of salvation! how perversely do we reject his offers of grace, and forsake our own mercy! yea, how unworthily do we treat him for his condescension and goodness! Well might an heathen<sup>m</sup> say, “ Dearer is man to God than man is to himself.” But much more reason have we Christians to say so, who have heard what he hath done for our souls.—Christ is indeed the lover of souls; but we, alas! love not our own! — *He blotteth out our transgressions*, &c. — Observe we here, and in what follows, the whole process and scheme of our redemption: 1st, The author: Christ is the only Saviour; “ there is no other Name given unto man whereby we can be saved ”—To him therefore, to him alone, as the sole author of salvation, must we apply. 2. The manner: How doth he save us? Even by saving us from our sins. It is not said he saves us from troubles, from sufferings, from death, from hell: No, by saving us from sin he saves us from all other miseries and dangers, which are but consequences and the necessary effects, of sin. For this end, and for our comfort, he assumed the name JESUS, a name (to us especially) above every name.—*He blotteth out our transgressions*, &c. In these words is intimated to us a doctrine of no small importance to

—<sup>m</sup> *Charior illi*

*Et bono quam sibi* — Juvenal.

observe:

observe: It is the Father's prerogative to forgive sins; but it is the Son's peculiar office to *blot them out*, and to cancel the hand-writing that was against us:—  
 'That the Father forgiveth none but such as are so *blotted out*, and cancelled, by the Son: And he *blotteth* them out, as he hath paid the debt, and made full and sufficient satisfaction to the divine justice. 3dly. The cause: And what was this but his love? He blotteth out our transgressions *for his own sake*. " God " (the Father) so LOVED the world, that he gave his " only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him " should not perish, but have everlasting life :" CHRIST, that only-begotten Son, so loved us, that he freely undertook the great work of our redemption, and submitted to death; even the shameful death of the cross, to ransom us from Death eternal. His love was stronger than death; his love would not let him rest till he had redeemed our souls from sin and misery; therefore to indulge his good will towards man, and gratify his love, and most earnest desire of our happiness, he came to seek that which was lost, and save our lives at the expence of his own: He did it *for his own sake*.—4thly, We are to observe the material cause which made this act of Redemption necessary. Sin had made us enemies to God, and the object of his vengeance: Sin had corrupted us in the very root, *our first father had sinned*, and we were all the children of wrath. This was the general universal disease of man, which Christ came to cure; and no other was able to cure it but he. Our teachers themselves are but sinful men; they also *have transgressed*; they may indeed point out to us the remedy, but cannot heal. None but he that is without sin can take away sin: " Such an high-priest therefore became us, " who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from " sinners, and made higher than the heavens." —5thly, The part which man is to act, in order to ef-

fectuate the great work of his redemption by Christ, and obtain a reconciliation with God, that he may be acquitted from his sins, is repentance. This is plainly taught us in those words, *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.* Here Christ instructs us like a kind advocate, what we are to do, that we may be saved: 1st, That we should apply ourselves to him, and put him in remembrance of his promise, and the covenant he had made to undertake for us, to discharge our debt, and to pay our ransom for us. 2dly, To confess our sins, and plead guilty, before God; but withal to hear him in his word pleading with and convicting us even of those sins, that through ignorance, or perhaps impenitence, and hardness of heart, we do not yet confess. These offences also we must declare, and be brought to confess, that so we may be *justified*, and obtain a full remission of our sins.—Without confessing and forsaking our sins, all that Christ hath done, or can do, for us, will be of no effect.—6thly and lastly, We are taught (1st, with respect to man) not only the doctrine of original sin, how it first entered into the world, even by the transgression of our first parent *Adam*, but the direful extent, and universal contagion derived from him to all his posterity. For God hath concluded all under sin, so that there is none good, no not one. The very *princes of the sanctuary* are polluted therewith; he putteth not trust in his saints, not even in the best of men, and the stars [of the church] are not pure in his sight. But how (2dly) is this taint, this general curse, and sin of the world, to be cleansed and taken away? Why, by none but by the son of God. Therefore God was pleased to give him *to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.* It is not said to *a curse*, but to *the curse* which was fallen upon mankind. Jesus Christ, the true *Jacob* and *Israel* of God, took our nature and our guilt upon himself; “on him were “laid the iniquities of us all, and by his stripes we “are healed.” *Isaiah liii.*

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The EPIPHANY; or, The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

First Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chapter ix.

P R E F A C E.

THE Church, in the Lessons and Scriptures appointed for this high day, exhibits to us the several ways by which Christ was manifested to Mankind.

1. By the Prophets; who foretold his appearance, and have described him by such circumstances and characters as peculiarly belong to him.

2. In the gospels; where the history and completion of what had been foretold by the prophets is faithfully related.

Christ was manifested to the Jews by shepherds; to these by angels; and to the Gentiles by the luminous appearance of a star.

The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles is nowhere so clearly foretold by the Prophets of the Old Testament, as by Isaiah, especially in chap. ix. and xlix. For which reason our church hath made choice of them for her two First Lessons on this great festival.

The principal design of the church in celebrating this feast, is to excite our gratitude towards God for publishing

ing his gospel to the Gentile world, and vouchsafing to us Gentiles equal privileges with his ancient and once peculiar people the Jews. The first instance and pledge of which divine favour towards us was in declaring the birth of Christ to the wise men of the east, who were Gentiles, and generally esteemed to have been kings. This manifestation seems to be foretold by our prophet. The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising, chap. ix. ver. 3. and chap. xlix. 3.

We are told by St. Chrysostom, That three great manifestations of our Saviour happened on this day, though not in the same year. The first was his manifestation by the star, which conducted the wise men to come and worship him.—This we commemorate in the collect and gospel. The second manifestation was that of the most glorious Trinity at his baptism; and this is related in the Second Lesson for the morning. The third was at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where he turned the water into wine, and thereby manifested forth his glory and divine power, so that his disciples believed on him.—This last-mentioned Epiphany (being so eminent a proof of his Divinity) is set forth in our Second Lesson for the evening service. And in the <sup>a</sup> epistle is declared the actual accomplishment of the great mystery of calling the Gentiles, which our two First Lessons do so clearly foreshew.

Note, The word Epiphany is Greek, and signifies Manifestation. The name at first (as some tell us) was given to the whole season, or the twelve days of Christmas; but it is now by the church appropriated to the last of them, namely to this day, which for that reason is commonly called Twelfth Day, it being the twelfth from Christmas-day.

There are two other titles given to this festival by the ancients. Sometimes it is called the day of the holy lights <sup>b</sup>: Nazianzen has a sermon upon it by that name. And sometimes the Theophany, or manifestation of GOD <sup>c</sup>.—The first of these names was given it, as being

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. iii.

<sup>b</sup> Τά ἅγια φῶτα.

<sup>c</sup> Θεοφανεία.

the day whereon they commemorated the baptism of Christ, who is a light to lighten the Gentiles, &c. and upon that account was made one of the stated days for public baptism in the primitive Church, which by them was usually called enlightening<sup>d</sup>. And, for the greater solemnity of so high a festival, it was also a custom to illuminate the Churches with great numbers of lighted tapers — The other name, Theophany, plainly shews the general and professed belief which the Church then had of the real Divinity of Christ; and that he who was manifested in the flesh was truly GOD as well as man; or, as St. Paul expressly stiles him. GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH<sup>e</sup>.

*The EPIPHANY; or, The Manifestation of  
CHRIST to the Gentiles.*

First Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH Chap. ix.

1. **A**RISE, shine, for thy light is come; and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

of the night of error and ignorance, out of the shades of death and sin: *Arise*, and shine forth by the light of thine example, that men, seeing the good works of those who are the true members of Christ, may glorify their Father which is in heaven, and let the world see, that the glory of the Lord, even JESUS CHRIST<sup>f</sup>, who is the brightness of his glory, is risen upon them of a truth.

2. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:

THE Spirit here speaketh to the Church collectively taken, as it includeth both Jews and Gentiles.—

*Arise out of obscurity, out*

*[Darkness shall cover the earth.]* The literal completion of this was seen in our Saviour's being born in

<sup>d</sup>See Heb. vi. 4.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>f</sup> Heb. i. 3.

*but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

the night ; for so the history of his birth acquaints us, that it was *by night* the shepherds beheld and heard the angels celebrating his Nativity.—But the mystical sense describes the night of ignorance, which had overspread the whole world with *gross* errors; or, at best, of very dark and imperfect notions concerning divine truths, both with respect to the worship or knowledge of God, and the salvation or true happiness of man.—Even the earth, the very *Jewish* nation (which, as Dr. *Hammond* somewhere observes, is often in holy writ called the *earth*), was, at the time of our Lord's appearance among them, *covered with darkness*.—The light of God's word was exceedingly obscured, and almost wholly extinguished, by the false glosses of their interpreters, the scribes and Pharisees; who are therefore by our Lord called “ blind leaders of the blind ;” “ lovers of darkness rather than light ;” “ refusing to come to the light, because their deeds were evil.”—And if the darkness was so great even among God's own people, how much greater, how very *gross*, must that *darkness* of ignorance be, which *covered* the whole *Gentile* world ! They were not only dark, but “ darkness<sup>g</sup>” itself, exceeding even the *Egyptian* darkness (which was such as might be felt); for they were insensible of it, and “ past feeling<sup>h</sup>,” as the apostle testifies of them ; not only “ having their understanding darkened through the ignorance that was in them, but their consciences cauterized or seared with an hot iron<sup>i</sup>.”

*The LORD shall arise upon thee.]* Note, in the verb *arise*, is couched the similitude of our Lord Christ to the sun, the *Hebrew* word signifying properly the sun's rising ; and is therefore parallel to that text in *Malachi* iv. 2. “ The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.” And by *Isaiah* xli. 2. he is call-

ed “the righteous man (or rather righteousness) “from the east.”<sup>x</sup>

*His glory.]* This alludes to the divine *shechinah* or glory of God, which appeared upon the tabernacle in the wilderness, in a bright cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This *glory* afterwards rested on the ark in the temple; and since the destruction of that temple, and final dissolution of the *Jewish dispensation*, is now transferred to, and unalienably settled on, the Christian Church, according to the declaration made her, ver. 20. *Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: For the LORD shall be thy everlasting light, and thy GOD thy glory.*

3. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

some writers (see *Hammond* on *Matth.* ii.); and was afterwards more signally verified in the conversion of so many kings and princes to the Christian religion; the eminent graces, and divine virtues, which appeared in its first professors, attracting the eyes of the greatest potentates, and winning them to become proselytes to the Church. See chap. xlix. 23. and ver. 10, 11. of this chapter.

4. *Lift up thine eyes round, about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.*

5. *Then thou shalt see and flow together; and thine*

This was literally fulfilled on this day, by the coming of the wise men from the east to the birth of Christ, if they were also *kings*, according to the opinion of

The like expressions are used in chap. xlix. ver. 18. and describe the universality of the Church, as well as the vast concourse of believers flocking unto her from all parts of the world.

The Church’s joy, on this astonishing success of the

<sup>x</sup> *Iustitia ab oriente.* See Second Sunday after Christmas on Isa. xlii. 2.

*beart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

passion is often ascribed to another. So the prophet *Jeremiah* useth the like expression, chap. xxxiii. 9. “ They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, “ and for all the prosperity, that I shall procure unto “ it<sup>1</sup>. ” And accordingly in the book of *Acts*, chap. ii. 23. upon occasion of the surprising success of the gospel, it is said, “ Fear fell on them all.”—By adding [*and be enlarged*] the prophet shews us it will be a religious fear; no other fear but that being consistent with joy, which is a passion that *enlarges* the heart; whereas all natural fear contracts it: And it expresses the mixture of holy joy, and reverential fear, which the triumphs and happy effects of the Christian religion shall occasion in all her sincere converts.

*Because the abundance of the sea, &c.]* A multitude of people is often in Scripture compared to many waters, see chap. xvii. ver. 12. *Rev.* xvii. 15. It also alludes more especially to the Gentile nations, whose countries in the prophetic stile are often called the *isles*, and *islands of the sea*.

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover thee: the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.*

7. *All the flocks of Kedar*

gospel, shall break out like an overflowing river; the sudden transport of which shall produce a surprize and astonishment like that which ariseth from the impressions of fear—The effect of one

*Midian, Ephah, Kedar, and Nebaoth*, were descendants of *Abraham* by *Hagar* and *Keturah*: And it denotes to us, that the children of *Abraham*, even according to the flesh (in which respects these were types of the *Gentiles*) should also be called, and united to the Church of

<sup>1</sup> See also *Psalms* ii. 11.

*shall be gathered unto thee  
the rams of Nebaoth shall  
minister unto thee: they shall  
come up with acceptance on  
mine altar, and I will glo-  
rify the house of my glory.*

accepted of him. And the *house of his glory*, which God here saith he *will glorify*, is the body or human nature of Christ, which was most divinely *glorified*, as the Godhead itself dwelt therein bodily, even all the fulness of God <sup>m</sup>; and for that reason was by our Lord (pointing thereto) called “this temple,” *i. e.* this *house of GOD* <sup>n</sup>.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

*Who are these, &c.—that fly?*—This denotes their swiftness:—*As a cloud*,—this expresses their unity; birds of the same species keeping together in their flight, and resembling a *cloud*. It represents likewise not only the harmony, but elevation of heart and heavenly-mindedness, of the first Christians. It may also intimate to us that their conversion, and this attraction of their souls towards heaven, and heavenly things, was the sole work of God, as *clouds*; and all heavenly meteors and motions are—*As doves*; this denotes their innocence and purity, as well as perfect unity; for *doves* not only keep always in company together, but are ever most constant to their mates, and to their houses.

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring*

Christ, so as to have the same privileges with the children of promise, and come up with equal acceptance on the altar.—The true altar of God is CHRIST, on which alone all our offerings are

The Church that was bidden to lift up her eyes round about, ver. 4. may here be supposed to have so done, and to put the question,

This is the answer of Christ to the Church.—By the *isles* (as we observed before) are meant the heathen nations;

<sup>m</sup> Col. ii. 9.

<sup>n</sup> John ii. 19.

*tby sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the Name of the LORD tby God: And to the Holy one of Israel, because he bath glorified thee.*

nations; and their waiting for Christ, expresses that readiness wherewith they entertained the gospel when first preached to them, as if they had been long in expectation of it. So Christ is said to be “the desire of all nations<sup>o</sup>. ” All mankind were in quest of happiness, and had long been seeking it in vain. This was the universal object of their wishes, and most ardent desires; but none ever found it till they found *Christ*; for he, and he only, is that *summum bonum*, and true felicity of man, which all men naturally desire, and wish for, yet none are capable of receiving, but by receiving Him through faith in his Name.—Therefore it is added, they shall bring their silver and their gold unto the Name of the Lord their God. That is, they should no longer depend on their riches, or the greatest advantages of this world, as the object of their happiness; but “count all things loss<sup>“</sup> and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ “Jesus their Lord<sup>p</sup>. ”—To his Name should they bring their silver and their gold, and give up all they had, and all they were, that they might win Christ.—To his Name we come when we put it on in baptism; and our silver and gold we bring with us, and give up to that sacred Name, when we promise to renounce the world.—But fail we not to remark, that his Name is here plainly affirmed to be the Name of the LORD our God; even the same of whom it is elsewhere also said to the church, “He is thy LORD God, and worship<sup>“</sup> thou him<sup>q</sup>: ” The same, of whom it is written, *Acts* xix. 5. “They were baptized in the Name of the Lord “JESUS.”

Our forefathers, before  
10. And the sons of the gospel-light arose, were  
*strangers shall build up thy* utter strangers and aliens to

<sup>o</sup> *Hag.* ii. 7.

<sup>p</sup> *Phil.* iii. 8.

<sup>q</sup> *Psal.* xlv.

*walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

the true God. But we their sons, and happier posterity, being called and converted to the Christian faith, have, in lieu of their idolatrous service, and barbarous superstitions,

tions, built up a church to the living God. Yea, his own temple among the Jews hath given way to the Christian church. That was to be thrown down, so that not one stone should be left upon another; and the church of Christ to be erected in its stead; whithin whose walls both Jew and Gentile are now united into one body.

*Their kings shall minister unto thee..]* If so; then let not any Christian be offended, if kings, who are styled “Defenders of the Faith,” be deemed in spiritual concerns, to hold but the second place. In temporal respects they preside as Heads of the church, and as such ought to have precedence; but in the affairs of religion, which are purely spiritual, it is not a duty only, but an honour to serve and minister unto her. And well may they count it so; for she is the spouse of Christ, the true queen of heaven, as well as mother of us all. And no one will begrudge to pay this honour to the church, who has piety enough left to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God,

11. *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night, that men might bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.*

12. *For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish: yea, those*

*Thy gates—shall not be shut, as the gates of the Jewish temple were to all but those of the circumcision.—The church of CHRIST is catholic, extending its limits to all nations, and open to all comers. All shall be welcome that enter in at the right door; and that door is*

nations shall be utterly wasted.

Christ : " I am the door,"  
saith he of himself ; " by  
" me if any man enter in, he

" shall be saved." — The gates of the church (faith St. Jerom) are *never shut day nor night*; they are open continually to those souls who come thither to seek God. Yea, he calls and invites them to enter, whether in the *day* of prosperity, or the *night* of adversity: Every season is alike to the divine mercy for receiving a returning penitent. As to such as, when they are called, refuse to enter within these gates, or, when admitted, will not stay, they forsake their own mercy; they will surely perish, they *shall be utterly wasted.*

13. *The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.*

Men are frequently in Scripture called *trees*; great men are called *cedars*, *oaks*, &c. Bad men, trees whose fruit withereth;—“without fruit “twice dead” trees to whose root the ax is laid. But good men are called “trees of righteousness;”

"the planting of the Lord"; "trees bringing forth their fruit in due season; whose leaf also shall not wither."—Here they are called the *fir-tree*, "the *pine-tree*," &c.—The *Fir*, to express their uprightness, their strait and erected affections towards heaven: *Pine-trees*, to denote their invincible patience, and the exemplary rectitude of their lives: *Box-trees*, to signify their great humility.—All of them are ever-greens, flourishing ever, but most in winter; some of them indeed without fruit, but never without life and verdure. Howbeit, he that is planted in the garden of God's church, although by nature he bear no fruit, yet if so be he live and flourish, he shall not want the fruits of grace.—The fruits which a Christian bears are not his own; they are those of the Holy Ghost: And His fruits are many. The church calls them twelve; namely, love, joy, peace, patience,

5 *Iaf.* lxi. 2.

P. 168.

long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (i. e. fidelity), meekness, mercy, shamefacedness, temperance. See *Rev.* xxii. 2. and *Gal.* v. 22, 23.—The explanation of them is to be seen in the instruction to confirmation, p. 51, 52,, &c.

14. *The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy one of Israel.*

15. *Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.*

16. *Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings; and thou shalt know, that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob.*

This prophecy was verified when the emperors of Rome, and the civil powers in many other Gentile nations, became converts to the Christian religion ; and from fierce persecutors turned to be faithful members, and kind defenders, of the church: And let so happy an event be a standing encouragement to the church, and all the faithful servants of God, which suffer for his sake, that a time of refreshing will assuredly come from the Lord ; yea, that such sufferings are a certain pre-sage of deliverance, and their approaching glory ; — That therefore we should rather rejoice than give way to unmanly desponding fears when we fall into divers temptations ,

knowing that “ tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ;” and that, if we continue stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, our hope shall not be in vain in the Lord.—Yea, sometimes, even in this life, God is pleased to vindicate the honour of his church, and give glory to his saints in the sight of men, by changing the hatred and ill-will of their enemies into love and veneration ; and the desolate and afflicted condition of his people, into admiration (even

(even from their persecutors) of those extraordinary graces, which he has bestowed upon them.

17. *For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine executors righteousness.*

improve therein. “ As such mens virtues increase, “ and grow more bright and excellent, it may well “ be said, their iron is changed into silver, and their “ brass into gold.” So St. Jerom<sup>t</sup>.

*I will make thy officers peace, &c.]* Note the Greek interpreters have rendered it, “ I will give thy princes “ in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness.” — Now, as this version of the seventy interpreters was long extant, and in common use, before the date of Christianity, we may easily account for the reason why the stile and title of BISHOPS was given to the rulers and chief governors of the Christian church. It seems plainly to be in pursuance of this prophecy, which expressly defines the very name as well as character and dignity of their office,—The rulers of the Jewish church were indeed usually called presbyters, i. e. elders; whence it naturally happened, that this title was the first that was given to the chief rulers of the Christian church, whose first founders were Jews. But the Septuagint (or Greek) translation of the Old Testament prevailing more especially in the Gentile church, the name of elders or presbyters by degrees was dropped with respect to the presidents and chief rulers of the church; and gave way to this of bishops,

<sup>t</sup> *Cum et ferrum per augmenta virtutum in aurum argentumque mutantur.*

“ Δωσω τοις ἀρχοντας σου ἐν ὁπλη, καὶ τοὺς ἵτικότες σοι ἐπίτικοτες.

which

good either when God raises up to his church men of eminent virtues, and solid piety, in the room of base and unworthy persons; or when those who are entered upon a religious course of life, advance in grace, and daily

such mens virtues increase, “ and grow more bright and excellent, it may well “ be said, their iron is changed into silver, and their “ brass into gold.” So St. Jerom<sup>t</sup>.

which soon became the universal stile of the ruling elders, both in the eastern and western church: And then the stile of presbyter was left to the second order: For whereas the word *bishop*, which signifies an overseer, expresses an office of superintendency over the other presbyters, and he being but one person presiding over many others, his fellow-presbyters; that [of bishop] was the most proper title to denote such his ruling power and authority. But as to the word Presbyter [from whence our *English* word Priest is derived), it expresses no more than barely the office of priesthood, without any such connotation of rule or government over the flock, or the rest of the clergy.— This we humbly conceive is no improbable conjecture; and may serve for an answer to the little cavils of our dissenting brethren, who contend for the greater antiquity of presbytery, as more spiritual than episcopacy; whereas, from this passage in our lesson, it appears most reasonable to think otherwise.

18. *Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise.*

land), there is no sin; and therefore *no violence*, consequently no *wasting*, no *destruction*, can be there. But this promise will then only have its full and most literal accomplishment, when the new heavens and the new earth shall appear. See chap. lxv. 18, 19 Rev. xxi. 4.

19. *The sun shall be no more thy light, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an*

The church here spoken to is that true, but invisible, part, which we call the communion of saints.—In Their *land* (which is elsewhere called the land of righteousness, the land of the living, &c.

and which is indeed the holy

Hitherto the temporal, as well as internal, peace and prosperity of the church, even while militant upon earth, hath been described: Here, her spiritual felicity is set

*everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.*

20. *Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*

set forth, and represented by her not standing in need of the greatest worldly blessings, of which the *sun* and *moon* are the noted instruments, as well as emblems. Yea, in comparison of the far greater light and comfort, prosperity and happiness, she enjoys in

Christ, the light of the *sun*, and *brightness* of the *moon*, are but darkness; and the benefits of their influence not worthy to be named. — The LORD himself shall be unto her an *everlasting light*; not only lighting us in this life, but extending our light and happiness to eternity.

*And thy God thy glory.]* Who this is, is clearly explained by St. John, in his description of the heavenly *Jerusalem*\*: “The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of “God did lighten it, and the LAMB is the light thereof.” — Afterwards he saith, “The Lord “God giveth them light.” Whence it evidently follows, that as the Lord GOD giveth this light, the Lamb that giveth that self-same light, is no other than the same Lord GOD.

21. *Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.*

The sum and perfection of that happiness, which God promiseth to his church, is, that *all her people shall be righteous*. Now this is made good to her; 1st, By the grace of regeneration in baptism, when all her members receive “a new birth unto righteousness.” 2dly, it is verified in all those who by a holy life constitute the communion of saints. 3dly, and finally,

\* Rev. xxi. 23.

¶ Chap. xxiii. 5.

it is fully completed in those, who shall compose the church triumphant, the spirits of just men made perfect. This righteousness must commence indeed in this life, but is perfected only in the next.—We must be first planted in God's vineyard, and that too by his hand, *branches of his planting, the work of his hands;* and then shall we inherit the land for ever, even that true paradise, whence we shall never be removed, or driven out.

22. *A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.*

The glorious kingdom of Christ takes its rise from small beginnings. So Daniel<sup>w</sup> describes it as a stone cut out without hands, then becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth.—And this (saith our prophet) *the Lord will hasten in his time.* But we can now say, “The Lord ‘hath brought this great thing to pass:’” We see the truth of the prediction in the event. The church, which was confined to a small spot, the land of *Israel*, is now become catholic, or universal; and in some measure hath filled the whole earth; so that *a little one is become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.* But still this prophecy will not receive its final completion till that glorious kingdom come, which we daily pray may come; when the will of our heavenly Father will be done upon earth, as it is [now] in heaven. And, O let all who look for these things, pray, that the Lord may *hasten it in his time:* And with the Spirit, and the Bride, say, Come: And let him that heareth, say, Come: And let him that is athirst, say, Come. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

<sup>w</sup> Chap. ii. 35.

## The EPIPHANY.

Second Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

L U K E, Chap. iii. to Verse 23.

*After reading the Lesson.*

**T**H E principal design of this lesson is, to set before us the *Epiphany*, or Manifestation of Christ, at his BAPTISM; how he was at that time not only declared by the voice of God to be *his beloved SON*; but more particularly his office of PRIESTHOOD was then, in the most solemn manner, conferred upon him; first, by an audible declaration of the Father from heaven; and then confirmed by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, visibly indicating him to be the person designed and appointed by that voice, and no other.

By the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, the Virgin had conceived the Holy Child Jesus in her womb; here, by the more apparent overshadowing of the same Blessed Spirit in the visible form of a Dove, the Son of God incarnate is, in an evident manner, consecrated into his sacerdotal office and ministry of reconciliation.

That this is the import of those words [*In thee I am well pleased,*] will more clearly appear, if we consider, first, what St. Paul speaks of the special designation

signation of Christ to the office of priesthood : “ No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was *Aaron*. ” And then adds, “ Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son,” &c. In which words the apostle seems plainly to refer to this appointment of Christ to the honour of the priesthood, as here related by the Evangelist. — And that the *Messiah* was designed to the sacerdotal office, appears from that saying of God to the Son, *Psalm cx.* “ Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of *Melchisedec*; ” for this is alleged by St. *Paul* (to the *Heb.* chap. v. 6.) as a prophecy to prove the same. But we have no passage in all the *evangelists*, that I know of, by which our Lord was actually ordained into that sacred office, except this form of words pronounced at his baptism ; which was also the proper time for his ordination.

Secondly, if we attend to the form itself [*In whom I am well pleased*], it is not so reasonable to suppose, that it is a mere amplification of the foregoing sentence, or explanatory only of the word *Beloved* — *My beloved Son*, are words, (even every one of them) which carry in them a force and energy of affection, superior to that of being *well pleased with* ; consequently, needed not any explanation, much less such an explanation, as, if taken in the usual sense put upon this passage, would seem to fall short of that degree of love, which the words *BELOVED Son* do most plainly express.

Besides, Thirdly, If we look back to the song of the angels, at the birth of Christ, we there find a parallel expression in that part of their hymn, “ God will towards men.” The good will of God towards men, celebrated by the angels at Christ’s nativity, and his *being well pleased* in Christ, as was declared at his baptism, may explain one the other. They import the same in the original<sup>a</sup>: The sense

<sup>a</sup> Εὐδοκία οὐδὲν κερά.

therefore,

therefore, most probably, must be the same. --- At our Lord's birth, God was pleased, by his angel, to proclaim his good will towards men ; but, at his baptism, he declares not by an angel, but by himself, and with his own voice, not only the same good will, but the mediator also, IN whom, and THROUGH whom, it is that he becomes *well pleased* with, and reconciled to, mankind ; namely, his own *beloved Son*. The second declaration explains the first ; it shews both the person, and the means, whereby God is pleased to accept an atonement, propitiation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world. Now we know, it is the peculiar privilege of the sacerdotal office, to render God propitious to man, to offer an atonement, and execute the ministry of reconciliation. And this office, which, by designation before the foundation, of the world, and afterwards by the voices of the prophets, our Lord had been appointed to, he was formally invested with, and actually consecrated into, and ordained by the Holy Ghost, at his baptism.

Great is the comfort, and most useful the doctrine, of this manifestation of Christ's SACERDOTAL office, which was conferred upon him as on this day ! --- Here we have not only the express declaration of God the Father, that he is *willing* to accept a peace-offering and atonement for our Sins, but the person specially ordained of God, even his own *beloved Son*, to be the High Priest for making the same, and offering that all-sufficient sacrifice, which should effectually satisfy the divine Justice. How comfortable must this reflection be, to every penitent soul, who considers this stupendous act of divine mercy and good-will ; and that he may with confidence, and the fullest assurance of faith, depend on the efficacy of his Redeemer's merits,---who has in so authentic a manner, been commissioned by God himself, to mediate and intercede for him ; and to offer up the only sacrifice, that can take away sin !

The doctrinal use resulting from hence, is partly ; First, what St. *Paul* also teaches, That the priesthood is an office of the greatest honour ; consequently ought to be very highly reverenced and esteemed of men, both for its dignity, and the benefits it confers.

Secondly, That as this office is most sacred in its institution, being immediately derived from God ; for “ no man, how great, how pious soever he may be, taketh this honour to himself, except he be called of God : ” so it is a prerogative solely belonging to God, to appoint his own ministers, and, more particularly, the office and persons, whereby he chooses to be propitiated towards man, and to accept of any terms of peace from, or grant to, his rebellious subjects. Hence the clergy are not only called, the “ lot of God’s inheritance,” but are styled his ambassadors, as sent and commissioned by Him to treat with us ; and to declare the conditions, on which he is willing to be reconciled. How great then must be the arrogance of those men, who, without his ordainment, intrude into the sacred office of priesthood ; or, without a competent authority, take upon them to ordain others ! The office, indeed, a man may, and too many do, intrude into, without a lawful call ; but the honour, or authentic administration, no man can take to himself, without the divine warrant and institution. They may call themselves ministers of the gospel ; but their preaching is no preaching, no embassage from God, except they be duly sent by him, or by those whom he hath authorized to send labourers into his vineyard.—Their sacraments are no sacraments of Christ : they may have the outward and visible sign, but they cannot have the inward and spiritual grace : being administered without, yea, contrary to, his authority. The same may be said of their other ministrations in the church : So that, without a divine legation from God, no man can take the honour, or constitute himself a priest unto

God, or receive a power from others, who have themselves no power to give it.

Mr. *Norris*, in his sermon on these words, *This is my beloved Son, &c.* Vol. II. of his *Practical Discourses*, explains the latter part of the verse, of the satisfaction made by Christ : So agrees with our exposition.

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The EPIPHANY, or Manifestation  
of CHRIST to the Gentiles.

First Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xl ix.

P R E F A C E.

**T**H E prophet having, in the foregoing chapter, verse 20. foretold the return of the Jews from their Babylonish captivity; in this he takes, from thence, occasion to foreshew the great enlargement of the church in after-times, by the coming of Christ, and conversion of the Gentiles; who should, with more readiness, embrace the gospel, than the Jews.

This lesson is a kind of interlocutory conference between Christ, the Father, and the church: The Messiah is introduced calling to the Gentiles, and declaring his commission and authority from God the Father to invite them into his church. He complains of the small success he was to meet with among his own people the Jews; but is encouraged with the prospect of succeeding more happily among the Gentiles: That to them he should be a light, and the salvation of God unto the ends of the earth: That their kings should arise, and their princes worship him: That he should be for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth; to set the prisoners of sin and Satan

*free ; and chase away the darkness of ignorance and error —Great and glorious are the privileges and blessings of the Christian church, which are set forth in this admirable lesson, this most Proper lesson for this joyful day !*

## The E P I P H A N Y.

First Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

I S A I A H, Chap. xlix.

i. *L*isten, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye people from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb ; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my Name.

**H**E R E we have the gospel in prophecy, and by anticipation ; Christ preaching it to the world, by his prophet, many hundred years before he came in person. And we, that have lived since his coming in the flesh, may well say, as he himself once said, on a like occasion, “ This day is this Scripture fulfilled in our ears<sup>a</sup>. ” We Gentiles, especially, may so say, who are here more immediately addressed to, and called.—We have seen, and, at this time, commemorate, the wonderful accomplishment of this unspeakable mercy of his incarnation. We behold not only the prediction in the prophet, but the fulfilling of that great mystery of godliness,—“ GOD manifested in the flesh.” His birth, his name, his nature, the glorious design, and gracious effects, of his coming, are set before us this day.—*He was called from the womb ;* and we have been celebrating his nativity.—*From the bowels of his mother shall his Name be mentioned,* saith the prophet ; and his Name was declared by the angel before he was born, saith the history<sup>b</sup>, and then given at his circumcision, even the Name

<sup>a</sup> Luke iv. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Luke ii. 21.

JESUS : That Name, above every name,—with respect to us! because, in virtue of this blessed Name, he saves us from our sins.

*2. And he bath made my mouth like a sharp sword ; in the shadow of his hand bath he bid me, and made me a polished shaft ; in his quiver bath he bid me,*

*3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

Christ is both the word of God, and the *mouth* of God. Here the law, and afterwards the gospel, calls this word going out of his mouth, *a sword, a sharp sword*, saith the prophet ; “*a sharp, two-edged sword*,” saith the beloved disciple ; yea, “*sharper than any two-edged sword*,” saith the great apostle of the *Gentiles*<sup>a</sup> :

For, as he tells us, this sword is not only “*quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit* ; but is a discerner of the “*thoughts and intents of the heart* :” It not only executes the divine justice, but is both judge and witness too : It slays the sinner,—or his sin ; hath, therefore, a double edge ; one directed by mercy, against our sins ; the other by justice, against the wilful impenitent. It seeks to slay him, as it did *Moses*, until he circumcise the child<sup>b</sup> ; that is, till he part with his beloved lusts. Either these must be cut off, or we. If we yield them up to be slain by this *sword*, we are saved ; if we refuse to have them mortified and slain, we ourselves shall be destroyed.

*In the shadow of his hand,—in his quiver, bath he bid me.]* If Christ be manifested, how is he *bid*? Why, it is certain, he is both ; and this is the mystery, the divine paradox of the Christian faith, which puzzles the wisdom of the world. The Son of God incarnate is both hidden and revealed ; revealed, and manifestly visible, in his human nature, but hidden and absolutely invisible, in his divine.—As Son, and

<sup>a</sup> Rev. i. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

<sup>c</sup> Exod. iv. 24, &c.

messenger of the Father, he aptly resembles a *shaft*, *polished*, and prepared to fly to the mark: And his body was the *quiver*, wherein it was *hid*. Both his natures therefore, are here implied and intimated to us; but more expressly asserted and described by St. Paul; “ G O D manifest in the Flesh<sup>f</sup>:”—Which he deservedly calls a GREAT MYSTERY.

4. *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the L O R D, and my work with my God.*

Here the *Messiah* relating, as it were, his answer to the Father) complains of the small success he foresaw his labours would have among the *Jews*; that, comparatively speaking, and in proportion to the dignity of his person, and office of Me-

diator, he should but *labour in vain*, and *spend his strength*, that is, the means used, and the mighty works he was to perform amongst men, *for nought and in vain*. This proved too true of the *Jewish* nations; nor is the veil yet taken off their hearts to this day:—But alas! hath not the Saviour too much cause to make the same complaint of us Christians; especially in these latter days? Are not we as disobedient and gainsaying a people, as ever the *Jews* were? And doth he not stretch out his hands to us as much *in vain*, as he did to them? They denied him as their *Messiah*: We, by our wicked works, and too many by their words, deny him as our G O D, the God that bought us..

5. *And now, saith the L O R D that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I*

Christ, in a peculiar manner, was not only sanctified in the womb, but formed there of the L O R D, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, to be his servant to bring Jacob again to

<sup>f</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>g</sup> See John xv. 24.

him

be glorious in the eyes of him, and recover the lost  
the LORD, and my God sheep of the house of Israel.  
shall be my strength, —But how are we brought  
back again to God? How

are those, who are lost recovered? Even by being conformed to the image of Christ, and being made like unto him: As here it is described, he was *formed in the womb* of the virgin, so must we, by being formed by the same holy overshadowing Spirit, in the womb of the church.—By our first creation, man was made after the similitude of God, and formed in the image of the [Elchim, or] Divine Being: But that image being defaced by the fall, our new creation is to be after the image and similitude of Christ: And this is effected by a second birth, as his also was. Then it is we receive a restoration of the blessed image, through the operation of the Holy Spirit in baptism, which, for that reason, is called “the laver of regeneration, “and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” He was made flesh, and born of a woman, that he might take hold of man; we are born anew, of the Spirit, that we may take hold of him, and, through him, be re-united to the Sacred Trinity, in whose name we are therefore baptized. Thus the church is the door to Christ, and gate of salvation: He the door, and the way, by which we have access to the Father.—Nor is this all: We are to resemble him, not only in the image of his righteousness and true holiness, but likewise in the office, or great work, for which he came into the world. He was *formed to be the servant* and instrument of God, in redeeming mankind: So are we; and should consider, that the chief end of our spiritual birth, and Christian calling, is to be his servants and instruments in promoting the salvation of our own and others souls; more especially, if he hath placed us in the station of ministers, magistrates, masters of families, or parents of any kind. All such

<sup>b</sup> Titus iii. 5.

are more immediately *formed* and designed to be his servants and agents, in carrying on the gracious purpose of his mediatorial office; in reconciling, and bringing back to God, all that are under their care, or within the verge of their influence or example.— And, O! what indefatigable pains had they need to take, in order to instil and cultivate the principles of virtue and piety in those who are under their charge; seeing their Master himself complains of such small success in the great work of conversion! But let them not despair, nor be discouraged: God will not reward according to their success, or the number of proselytes, but according to their labours, and sincere endeavours. Though their labour prove in vain, as to far the greater number, it shall not be in vain in the Lord. In his eyes they themselves shall be *glorious*, though they bring but few to glory; and their God shall be *their strength*.

*6. And he said, it is a light thing, that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

That these words are directed to Christ, is sufficiently plain, from the context: But the application to him, made by St. Paul, *Act*s xiii. 47. puts it out of all doubt: And as it justifies the wisdom of our church in the choice of this lesson, so the promise here made to her Lord and Master, is an encouragement to all faithful pastors,

and all sincere promoters of his religion; that, *although Israel be not gathered*, i. e. though they may not prevail to bring their flocks, their families, or even their children, to God, yet they shall have better success with others; perhaps, strangers and unbelievers; perhaps, after they are dead, by their works, or surviving examples, as their Lord had, after his death and resurrection. Then it was, and not till then, that *he restored the preserved of Israel*, and became *a light* to

to the *Gentiles*, and the *salvation* of God even to the end of the earth; as we see verified on ourselves, at this day, except we shut our eyes, and refuse to see the light.

7. *Thus saith the LORD the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy one to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy one of Israel, and he shall choose thee.*

*Thus saith the LORD,*  
etc.] Here the Godhead, as it subsists unitedly in the blessed Trinity of persons, speaks to the *Messiah*: And that the Three Sacred Persons are here to be understood, appears by the triune character and appellation (which is frequent also in the *Psalms* and the prophets) of the *LORD the Redeemer, the Holy one*.—That

the *Messiah* is here spoken to, appears very evidently, by the description, first, of his state of humiliation, and then of his glory and exaltation. But to exclude an error, which some have objected, and others have run into, that if the *Messiah* be GOD also as well as man, this would imply a quaternion, or four persons in the Godhead, we are to observe, that the description of the Godhead in our text is so repeated and modified, as to confirm our faith in the Trinity of persons subsisting in the Divine Unity; viz. First, *The LORD who is faithful*; that is, the FATHER, who had promised to send his Son and is “*faithful and just to forgive us our sins*<sup>1</sup>:” Secondly, *The Holy one*; that is, the HOLY GHOST, who sanctifies us: Thirdly, *He*; that is, the SON, *shall choose thee*: —That is to say, the Godhead, and, particularly, the Son, who is often distinguished by the personal pronoun *HE*, shall choose; that is, shall assume thee into a personal union with himself: So that, as our article expresses it, “*Two whole and perfect natures, that*

<sup>1</sup> *John i. 9.*

“ is

“ is to say the Godhead and manhood, shall be joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ very GOD, and very man.”—Thus a quaternion is avoided, and the right faith of a Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, is preserved whole, undefiled, and consistent with itself.—That the *Messiah*, in the days of his flesh, was despised and rejected of men; *abhorred of the nation*, that is, of his own people the *Jews*; and *a servant of rulers*, by paying them tribute, &c. appears from the history of his life in the gospels. That *kings* should *arise*, and *princes worship him*, was fulfilled first as on this blessed day, by those wise men, those three *Gentile* kings, who came on purpose to worship him<sup>1</sup>. But this was afterwards more eminently fulfilled by the general conversion of the heathen world, when the forces of the *Gentiles* were brought into the church, and their kings became her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers; yea bowed down with their face to the ground at the mention of his Name; that Name above every name, the saving, life-giving Name *Jesus!* And blessed for ever more be his Name, for his unspeakable mercy to us poor *Gentiles!* Our holy and most excellent church requires of all her members, from the highest to the lowest, the same homage and profound reverence to be paid him, at the hearing of his sacred Name<sup>2</sup>. But O horrible and profane neglect of too many, in these degenerate and more than *Laudicium* times, who refuse to bow the head, or the knee, to his adorable Name, and yet presume to call themselves Christians!

*S. Thus saith the LORD,*  
*In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve*

*St. Paul explains this passage, and expressly applies it to the Epiphany, or first coming of Christ = it is here called an acceptable time, and a day of salvation: If*

<sup>1</sup> Matthew ii. 2

<sup>2</sup> See Canon. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

*thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;*

so, it must be our part, as St. Jerom on the place exhorts, to follow his steps, and walk in his light ; that so it may to us also be an acceptable time, a day of salvation.

The words [*give thee for a covenant of the people*] may suggest to us a sense not enough attended to ; viz. That the second covenant, which God hath made with mankind, was in truth no other than the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, the very Son of God himself : So that we are not to conceive an idea of any formal deed or instrument, any verbal compact or agreement distinct from the party covenanted with God and man, but only Christ himself ; who being both GOD and Man in his own person, and so the fit representative both of the offended, and the offending parties, that were to be reconciled, this union of the human and divine nature in Him became the very covenant itself ; as not only stipulated, but executed, by and in Him : So that the Father giving Him for a covenant of the people, is the same, in effect, with what Christ saith ; “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—Hence also appears the necessity, why all that by faith accede to this covenant and treaty of peace between God and man, must become members of, and be vitally united to Him, who is THE covenant itself, before they can partake of its benefits, and be reunited to God. Hence, likewise, belief in Him is, in other places, called, “ take hold of his covenant.”—And therefore that expression of our Lord in the institution of the Eucharist, where he calls the wine “ the new covenant in his blood” ; is less figurative than is generally

<sup>a</sup> John iii. 16,

<sup>b</sup> Luke xxii. 20.

thought. The cup, indeed, represents the wine; and the wine the blood of Christ: But the COVENANT IN HIS BLOOD is literally and strictly true; it being the very covenant itself, even the Son of God in his own blood, as Son of man.—It is in virtue of such hypothetical union of the divine and human nature, that the Son of God redeems, or, as the apostle speaks, “God (*i.e.* the Godhead) in Christ reconciles the world to himself.” In virtue of the same divine energy, accompanying the memorial of his blood in the sacrament, he still cleanses us from our sins, continuing to maintain, in full force and efficacy, the covenant he made with, and for man: nor can it ever fail, seeing this covenant is himself, and therefore most justly called elsewhere, The everlasting covenant.

9. *That thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.*

10. *They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them, shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall be guide them.*

11. *And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.*

12. *Behold, these shall come from far: and lo,*

A state of sin is often in Scripture called bondage, captivity, imprisonment, and darkness. And to express the state of the damned, these miseries are put together, and called “chains of darkness.” By the one, our liberty is taken from us; by the other, our light, and sometimes our very sight, also.—But as sin in itself is of a spiritual nature, and can affect nothing but spirit; the prison, and the darkness, to which it consigns us, is not that of the body, but the soul. It leads our will captive; yea, not only deprives it of freedom, but

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4.

thrusts

*these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim.*

thrusts it into the inner prison; and lays chains and bolts of strong lusts, and inveterate habits, on our will

and actions, and thickness and darkness on our understandings. Christ alone, like the angel to *Peter*, can open our prison-door, and dispel our darkness: He saith to the prisoners, *Go forth*,—and they go; for he sets at liberty by his word: He bids them that are in darkness, *Show yourselves*: and he gives them light; yea, at the same time he gives the light, he gives the power also to come forth out of darkness into his marvelous light. He also it is, that feeds the soul with heavenly food, and refreshes it with spiritual drink; so that it shall *no more hunger and thirst*,—after the pleasures and vanities of this world. He covers and shelters us from the scorching flames of concupiscence, and unlawful desires, as well as from the intended malice of persecuting rage; so that neither *heat nor sun*, no sufferings of any kind, *shall smite us*.—Sufferings are no sufferings to the truly pious man,—No torment shall touch him that is perfect in love, because such love casteth out all tormenting fear. And what evil can befall us, when *he that bath mercy* on us, is leading us to the springs of comfort; when he that *guides* in the way, and defends us, is the *LORD*, mighty to save?

13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD bath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

*Sing, O heavens.]* This came literally to pass, on that blessed night, when the Saviour of the world was born. The whole choir of heaven poured forth in numbers without number (as Milton speaks) to celebrate the Nativity of the Holy

JESUS: And the gospel gives us the very song which

\* *1 John iv. 18.*

they

They sung, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" These were the words of that birth-day song, which the *heavens* sung, to proclaim to all the world the glory of God, and happiness of man,—The sweetest song that was ever heard of men, or sung by angels! How should it turn all sorrow into joy, and make even the *earth*, and the *mountains*, to *break forth into singing!* Such comfort, such mercy to lost man, is sufficient, one would think, to animate our *earth*, the most sluggish carnal heart, into joy; and make our *mountains*, the very proudest spirit, to fall down and adore his unspeakable goodness and love!

14. *But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

But O how dim-sighted is man! Many times it happens to the most pious souls, as here it did to *Zion*: They see not their own mercies when they come: They

hear, as she did, the glad tidings of salvation; yea, they behold the mercy verified in others; but are too apt to doubt, yea, to deny their own justification; are afraid to apply to themselves that grace of God in Christ, which bringeth salvation. They cannot, by faith, take hold of the promises of mercy and peace; nor be persuaded they have any interest therein. When Christ cometh to visit them, they cry out, as *Mary* did even to himself, before she knew him, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him": Or, as here *Zion*, though she had all God's fresh springs in her, and though her Lord made her the first visit, and first tender of grace, yet she overlooks all those blessings, and cries out, *The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she hath not, will not, forsake,*

No, O thou pensive,

mourning soul, the Lord

*should not have compassion  
on the son of her womb ?  
yea, they may forget ; yet  
will I not forget thee.*

16. *Behold, I have  
graven thee upon the palms  
of my hands ; thy walls are  
continually before me.*

17. *Thy children shall  
make waste : thy destroyers,  
and they that made thee  
waste, shall go forth of  
thee.*

more yearning and tender, than the love of a *woman* to her *fucking child*? And yet the most passionate concern of a mother for her fucking child falls infinitely short of the tender mercies of our God. Many a woman has forsaken her helpless babe, and cast off the bowels of love and compassion to her own ch ld ; but never was an instance, nor ever will there be, of our heavenly Father's leaving and forsaking any one of his dear children. He renounces none but such as first renounce him. Yet even then he doth not forget his unhappy strays, his most wayward children ; he comes to seek that which is lost ; his bowels of compassion still yearn towards them ; yea, not only his heart, but his hands, wear the impressions of his love ; witness the pierced heart, and wounded hands, of our dear Redeemer. Those marks indelible of his unfeigned love, which, in very deed ; were *graven on the palms of his hands*, and on his side, are eternal and perpetual remembrances, even in heaven, to remind him of his church ; while her *walls* here below, how unworthy and neglectful soever some of her members may be, are as constant remembrancers upon earth, while they retain the solemn memorials of what his love hath done and suffered for us : Yea, a time will come (O come it soon !) when her children,

much less forget thee.—As his hand is not shortened, that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear ; so neither are his goodness, his love, his compassion, in any degree lessened from what they ever were : And the degrees of his tenderness as far exceed the affections of nature, as infinitude transcends what is finite—What natural love can we conceive more strong,

all her faithful children, shall hear the sweet voice of love ; saying, " Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. — " Lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth " nigh." — Then shall they make *haste*, and arise out of their very graves, and find, by a joyful experience, that not one of all the happy number hath been forgotten. Then shall her *destroyers*, and *all that made her waste*, wicked men, and wicked spirits, *go forth* of her, and never molest her more.

18. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold : all these gather themselves together ; and come to thee : as I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely cloath thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth.*

19. *For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.*

26. *The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me : give place to me, that I may dwell.*

21. *Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro ? and*

Yea, even in this world, a time of prosperity is promised to the church. She hath the blessings of both worlds entailed upon her : And however discouraging her present prospects may appear, while she sojourns in this vale of tears, she shall not be disappointed of her hope. Zion, even while she thought herself forsaken of God, and bereaved of her children, is here bidden to *lift up her eyes*, and to behold a vast multitude from all parts gathering themselves together, and coming unto her, to supply the place of those whom she lost : Is told, that this recruit shall so far exceed them in number, that not only her *waste* and *desolate places* should be inhabited, but become *too strait* for her new inhabitants.—This passage contains the prophecy of the *Gentiles* call and accession to the church ; which is the principal

*who bath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone, these, where had they been?*

22. *Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.*

23. *And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

put us on as *ornaments*, and as a marriage-garment, is a plain and cogent argument of the reasonableness and fitness of such conformity to the dignity, and holy design, of our profession.—Moreover, what is said to *Zion*, of cloathing herself with ornaments as a bride doth, and of the children she should have after she had lost the others, is no less plain an intimation to us, of the real and invariable unity of the church; that is, that she is, and ever hath been, the *SAME*\* in all ages from the beginning. There never was, nor ever will be, but one Church, according to that saying of Christ her spouse, “*My Dove my Undefiled, is but ONE*; she is the only one of her

cipal subject of our lesson.—Such an enlargement was littly expected by the Jews; nay was rather rejected and disbelieved, though so plainly and so frequently foretold: And, “even unto this day, “remaineth the same veil “untaken away, in the reading of the Old Testament,” and the prophets: But we *Gentiles*, even we *Britons*, the most remote of all the *Gentile* world, not only see this prophecy fulfilled, but are ourselves partakers of the Blessing.—And O that all amongst us, who this day commemorate the glorious manifestation of Christ to us *Gentiles*, would also labour to walk worthy of so high a calling, so great a mercy! That *Zion* should

“*2 Cor. iii. 14.*” \* *Semper eadem.* X “*mother;*

“ mother <sup>x</sup>;”—one in all essential properties, as she is that mystical body, whereof Christ is head: Her name, indeed, has been changed, as *Abram*’s was to *Abraham*, *Sarai*’s to *Sarah*, *Jacob*’s to *Israel*, *Saul*’s to *Paul*: But as their personal character changed not, so neither hath the church suffered the least alteration in her native, genuine, and constituent principles. From patriarchal she came to be called *Jewish*; from *Jewish*, to be named *Christian*; from *Zion* and *Jerusalem* (denoting her limitation, for that time, to one certain people) she is now become *Catholic*, and universal, as extended and accessible to all nations. Her garments also she has changed, as having now cloathed herself with us *Gentiles as with an ornament*: Her state likewise is also changed; but in herself she is still the same. Before the coming of Christ, she was in the state of a virgin betrothed; and is therefore so often called in the Old Testament; “ the virgin of *Israel*; “ the virgin daughter of *Zion*<sup>y</sup>:” But on his coming in the flesh, she is become married, and expressly called “ the Lamb’s Wife<sup>z</sup>. ” Thus under all these changes of circumstance and condition, she herself hath never changed; and is therefore so properly compared to the moon, which, though so often waxing and waning, as well as appearing in different positions, retains still the same body, the same unity of substance.

Another divine comfort is here suggested; or rather repeated, to every humble soul, every pious mourner in *Zion*; that when we think our virtues weakest and fewest, yea, look on ourselves as destitute, naked, and stripped of every heavenly grace, *desolate and captives*, and *removing to and fro*, as poor vagabonds upon earth, then, even then, is the angel near to comfort (as he was to *Hagar* in her wilderness, when her water was spent); then is the spring just at hand, though we see it not, to revive and cherish our fainting

<sup>x</sup> Cant. vi. 9.

<sup>y</sup> *Isaiah*, &c.

<sup>z</sup> Rev. xxi, 9.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xxi.

spirits:

spirits : Yea, sometimes such a torrent of comforts is suddenly poured in upon the mourning soul, that she cannot believe them real, cannot think them to be her own, or to belong to her : Stands amazed and astonished at the greatness, the multitude, of her consolations ! *Who hath begotten me these ?* she cries ; *seeing I had lost my children,*—all and everyone of my worldly comforts ; and *am desolate*, a poor *captive removing to and fro*, seeking rest, and finding none ; *Who hath brought up these ? Behold, I was left alone : These ! Where had they been ?*

24. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered ?*

25. *But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered : for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.*

26. *And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine : and all flesh, shall know, that I the LORD am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob.*

*dissi*, and others, shall face to the earth, and lick up the very dust of her feet ; that is, be ambitious to do the meanest offices of service to the church of Christ. But miserable are they,

and in dead things is their hope, who by persecutions vex ; by tyranny, *oppress* ; by revilings, defame ; by contempt, vilify, this holy spouse of Christ, and mother of us all ; who by contentions wound her peace ; or by schism rend her unity. They shall all find to their cost, that they do but “ lay wait for “ their own blood, they lurk privily for their own “ lives<sup>b</sup>.”—They who seek to devour her patrimony, and consecrated rights, shall be *fed with their own flesh*. They that thirst for her destruction, shall be made *drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine*. For here her Lord and Husband has declared, that he will *content with them that contend with her* ; and *all flesh shall know*, that He who is the *Mighty one of Jacob*, is her *Saviour and Redeemer*. Amen, Amen.

<sup>b</sup> *Proverbs* iii. 18.

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## *The EPIPHANY.*

Second Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

John, Chap. ii. to Verse 12,

*After reading the Lesson.*

**M**A NY and useful are the instructions, which may be gathered from this relation of our Lord's presence and miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

First, We behold him as a member of society, in that amiable light of benevolence and good humour, which recommends and endears us to each other. While he appeared in our flesh, and conversed among men, he conversed and behaved as other men do.—In matters civil, political, or purely indifferent, we observe him social, obliging, and humane : as well as religiously strict in all things spiritual and divine.—Here he refuses not an invitation to a *wedding*: Not only his holy Mother was there, but *Jesus also was called, and his disciples, to the marriage*; and he disdained not to go with them, and to make one of the company.

In the next place, we are led to consider the dignity of that state, and to esteem it truly honourable. As marriage had its first institution in Paradise, so here we find it made the first scene of our Lord's

miraculous power upon earth, and the first occasion of *manifesting forth his glory*.—With what holy reverence then ought we to engage in that state, and how solemn should the celebration be, where Christ himself vouchsafes to give his presence!—We learn also; that our Lord is no enemy to innocent mirth: He has not banished chearfulness, or good cheer, from our social entertainments, but rather promotes them. Nor is he an enemy to the use of wine, as appears by this first scene of his ministry, and likewise by that his last and most solemn act at the institution of his supper. Here we behold him supplying the wine that maketh glad the heart of man; yea, even turning water into wine, when the stock of wine was spent.—He indeed bestows both the necessaries and comforts of life with a liberal hand; but then he expects, as we are rational creatures, as well as in regard to his perpetual presence and inspection, that we should keep our mirth and our feasts within the bounds of sobriety and innocence.

But the chief design of the church, in choosing this for one of her proper lessons on this extraordinary festival, is grounded on the reflection, which the evangelist makes in the last verse of our lesson: *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him*.—It was the Divinity of our Lord the evangelist had chiefly in view to prove by this relation of his first miracle: It is the same doctrine of faith in the essential Godhead of our Saviour, which the church propounds to us in this lesson, and particularly at this season—As the prophet in our two first lessons had clearly asserted the Divinity of the *Messiah*, here the gospel relates an evident proof and manifestation of it in this extraordinary miracle, which none but God could perform. And as this is produced as the first evidence of his divine power, so all his other miracles are confirmations of the same truth, and do equally, if not still more strongly, *manifest forth his glory*.

And

And if *his disciples* (as we find it immediately added) *believed on him*, upon the testimony of this one, this *first*, miracle of his, how ought we, and all who pretend to be his disciples, to be indubitably convinced by that series of miracles, and repeated acts of divine power, which are recorded in the gospel history, when this *first* is mentioned, as of itself sufficient to persuade us of his Divinity.

It is said he then *manifested forth his glory*: That is, faith Dr. *Hammond*, “He gave evidence of the presence of his Divinity. As the *glory* of God (called “the *Shechinah*) had formerly been in the temple, it was now, in the person of Christ, as Son of man, appearing among men, and working miracles.”— For tho the incarnation of Christ was the greatest humiliation of him, yet was it nevertheless the greatest manifestation of his glory to mankind.— Never was seen so much of the divine power and glory upon earth, as in this his appearing in the flesh, and doing these wonderous works and miracles in his own person. Hence it is, that our Lord’s performing this miracle at the marriage in *Cana*, is called the *manifesting forth his glory*, that is, evidencing the inhabitation of the Godhead in himself: For that the Godhead was his own, and not another’s, appears by the evangelist’s stiling this glory, or Godhead, *his own glory*; for so the original expresses it<sup>2</sup>; he himself being the very and eternal God, whose glory was manifested in this, and all his other miracles.— And seeing that *his disciples*, on the sight of this *first* miracle, *believed on him*, whose disciples must they be, who after all his miraculous works, all his declarations, all the testimonies of Scripture, both by prophets and apostles, of martyrs, saints, and confessors through every age of the church, are not afraid to deny the Lord that bought them, and renounce the faith of Christ’s Divinity, which was once delivered to the Saints?

<sup>2</sup> τὴν δόξαν ἀντεῖ, suam gloriam.

## The First Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xliv.

P R E F A C E.

*I*T hath been observed before, that the principal design of the Church in the choice of her proper Lessons during the Christmas and Epiphany season, is to establish our faith in the great article of Christ's Divinity: and to prove, that he is truly and essentially GOD. In this Lesson, it seems to be her more special intent to set forth his twofold nature, that he is both God and Man, perfect GOD and perfect MAN.

Our Mediator, as man, is here called Jacob and Israel; names very frequently given to Christ in the prophets;—not only as he was descended from that patriarch, but rather, as he was in a peculiar manner typified by him: Insomuch that we may say, JESUS CHRIST was the true Jacob and Israel; the other, but his type and forerunner.—Moreover, it is to be observed, that as the name of Jacob and Israel does elsewhere signify, in a political and civil sense, the people of Israel, or whole Jewish nation; so, in the spiritual and mystical meaning, the same names in this chapter, and other places, when applied to Christ, do also denote his spiritual PEOPLE, the Church; who are therefore by the apostle called the  $\Sigma$  Israel

"Israel of GOD<sup>a</sup>?" They are often likewise called "his seed<sup>b</sup>;" and so distinguished from the more carnal posterity of Jacob, which by the same apostle are called "Israel after the flesh<sup>c</sup>."

This note will serve for a key to sundry passages in this evangelical prophet concerning Christ and his Church; and the context will easily determine in which of them the name most properly belongs.—In this chapter, it is very obvious, that by the name Jacob, Israel, and Jeshurun, is to be understood the Messiah, in his personal capacity of Redeemer, and as he that was ordained of God to be the Mediator between God and man. But then all the glorious privileges here and elsewhere promised to him, under these several names, are conveyed to, and settled on, the Church, in and through him, her supreme Head and Founder.

The better to understand and apply the purport of our lesson, it is to be observed, that the foregoing chapter concludes with the most severe threatening, that Jacob should be given up to the curse, and Israel to reproach.—Now this hath come to pass both in the literal and the mystical sense: The Jews, who rejected the Messiah, are to this day become a curse, and a proverb of reproach, to all nations. Christ also (the mystical Jacob and Israel) hath been made a curse for us, and was given up to reproaches, when he suffered on the cross for the sins of the world.—But our lesson begins with a plain transition from threatenings to promises, from a curse to a blessing; yea, from the Jewish to the Christian Church, it appearing by that introductory expression [Yet now hear] where-with our chapter begins, that a change of oeconomy, as well as time, is here designed; and that the promises now made refer to the gospel, not to the law: For "as many as are of the works of the law, are (as the apostle observes) still under the curse<sup>d</sup>;" but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ<sup>e</sup>" and belong to them only who are in him. These, by the prophet, are called the servants,

<sup>a</sup> Gal. vi. 16. <sup>b</sup> Isa. liii. &c. <sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. x. 18. <sup>d</sup> Gal. iii. 10, &c.  
<sup>e</sup> John i. 17.

and the chosen of God, in express opposition to those whom he had rejected.

The First Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lesson for the Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xliv.

1. *YET now bear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen.*

2. *Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee, Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jeshurun\*, whom I have chosen.*

and consequently as a creature.—But, in the following verses, his Divine Nature is as plainly asserted, 1st, As LORD, ver. 6. &c. 2dly, As GOD, ver. 8, &c. 3dly, As CREATOR, ver. 24, &c. in opposition and contradistinction to his above-mentioned characters, of servant, of man, and of creature.—These distinctions of nature, office, and essence, in our blessed Redeemer, do very easily solve all those objections, which some heretics have raised against his human nature; and which the *Arians*, and their modern followers, do most unreasonably borrow from

\* The name *Jeshurun*, signifying, *righteous*, is peculiarly suitable to Christ, who is the Lamb without spot; yea, *righteousness* itself, even the *LORD* our righteousness. The church, when her infirmity is spoken of is often called *Jacob*; and when her glory and valour are signified, she is called *Israel*. So Parker on Gen. xxxii. page 697.

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**A**S our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is both God and Man, and has a twofold nature, the human and divine; this lesson presents him to our faith under both those characters, First, As man, by the name of *Jacob* and *Israel*: made and formed from the womb; as a servant chosen and appointed to a special office;

the characters of his humanity, to impugn and deny his Divinity.—But, O my soul, come not thou into their secrets; to their assembly be not thou united, &c.—By destroying the manhood in *Jesus Christ*, they vacate, what in them lies, the reality of his sufferings: By denying his Divinity, they invalidate the propitiation and all-sufficient merits of his death. Both these adversaries of our Faith oppose the salvation, as well as Saviour, of mankind; the one making his passion impossible, the other ineffectual: Impossible, if he were not truly man: ineffectual, if he be not as truly GOD.

3. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grafts, as willows by the water-courses.*

5. *One shall say, I am the L O R D's: And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the L O R D, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

“ Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;” i. e. He cannot be a member of the Christian church. Note we likewise the two different states of man are here represented; 1st, That of nature, before baptism, and in which we were born: This is described by the *dry ground*; which can, of itself, produce nothing. 2dly, The state of grace, or life of the spirit:

Here is set fourth what the church at this season hath also a special eye to, namely, the calling of the *Gentiles*; and that baptism should be the appointed means for adding to the church such as should be saved.—Not only the new *name* then given, but both the outward sign, and spiritual grace, in that sacrament, are here foretold and described; to wit, *Water*, and the *Spirit*; according to our Lord's own saying, in *John* iii. which is a true interpretation of this prophecy, “ Ex-“ cept a man be born again “ of water, and the Holy

rit : This is figured to us by a fruitful and well watered soil, producing not only plenty of herb and grass, but *willows* also ; the willow being a most vivacious tree, and of speedy growth, which no lopping or cutting is able to kill, while it stands by the *water-courses*, and while the root remains in the ground.—A lively emblem this, of the true Christian, and of the spiritual life by which he lives ; and by which he overcomes the sharpest wounds of persecution, yea, of death itself :—“ Though cut down to the ground,  
 “ it will sprout again, and the tender branch thereof  
 “ will not cease : Though the root thereof wax old in  
 “ the earth, and the stock thereof seem to die in the  
 “ ground ; yet through the scent of *water*, it will  
 “ bud, and bring forth boughs again like a plant.”—

Happy were it for Christians, if they knew their own happiness, and did but reflect on the infinite benefit of baptismal grace, which confers on us a life, which of itself, can never die ; even the spirit of life, by which “ the old *Adam* is buried, and the new man  
 “ raised up in us ; by which all carnal affections  
 “ die in us, and all things belonging to the spi-  
 “ rit do live and grow ; by which we have power  
 “ and strength to have victory, and to triumph  
 “ against the devil, the world, and the flesh :” Which consequently nothing but our own fault and self-enmity can ever deprive us of.

*One shall say, I am the Lord's.]* This was literally verified in that saying of St. Paul's, “ I am Christ's<sup>h</sup> :” And, at the same time, it proves, that CHRIST and JEHOVAH are the same, the same Lord, the same God.

*Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.]—* This is done in baptism when we receive our Christian name. As it is usual for children to call themselves

<sup>f</sup> Job xiv. <sup>g</sup> Office of baptism in the *Liturgy*. <sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. xii.  
*Ego autem Christi.*—But in the Hebrew of the prophet, it is, I  
 am Jehovah's

after the name of their father, so Christians, being the seed and offspring of Christ (ver. 3. &c.), especially if legitimately born of his Spouse the Church, are properly called *by his Name*.

*Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord].* This is done by adult converts, when, on their conversion to the Christian church, they give in their names to the Minister of Christ, in order to be admitted to baptism.—*And surname himself by the name of Israel ;] i. e. shall not only be called a Christian, but be an Israelite indeed, and make good the sacred import of that name, and of that character required in every Christian by St. Paul, “ Let every one that “ nameth the Name of Christ, depart from ini- “ quity.”*

6. *This saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.*

7. *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the antient people ? And the things that are coming, and shall come ? Let them shew unto them.*

8. *Fear ye not, neither be afraid : Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it ? Ye are even my witnessses. Is there a God besides me ? Yea, there is no God, I know not any.*

To prove his Divinity, Christ the L O R D first pleads his titles ; then his attributes of omniscience, eternity, wisdom, and providence.—King of Israel is the acknowledged title of the *Messiah* : See *Psal. xlvi. &c.* This stile of King is also assumed by Christ himself, *Matth. xxv.* But here, by the mouth of the prophet, it appears, that this King of Israel is no other than *Jebo-vah*, the Most High God.—Another of our Lord's undoubted title's is the *Redeemer* : His adversaries, if they allow this, must at the same time be compelled to own, that he, who is here called the *REDEEMER* of

Israel, is likewise called the *LORD of hosts*. If they grant, that the title of *the First and the Last* is here claimed by the Most High God; how will they elude the consequence, that the self-same title is given to, and expressly claimed by, our Lord Jesus Christ in his *Revelation to St. John*; “I am *Alpha and Omega*, the “Beginning and the End, the FIRST and the LAST.” And to stop the mouths, if possible, of all gainsayers, the same who calls himself *First* and the *Last*, in the *Apocalypse*, i. 8. (and consequently is the same who speaks here in our lesson by the prophet) says also, ver. 17. “I am he that liveth, and was “DEAD.”

The title of *First and Last* is also declarative of his eternity; even of that eternity, which includes both the terms of past and to come<sup>m</sup>: That he is from everlasting to everlasting: That “in the beginning “he was<sup>n</sup>,” he existed; consequently no time ever was when he existed not: And, for the time to come, “his throne endureth for ever<sup>p</sup>.”—As Creator, he must needs be *First*, “as all things were made by “him, and without him nothing was made that was “made<sup>q</sup>:” As man, he is *Last*; even as man was the last of all the creatures which God made.—The other attributes of knowledge and providence, which are produced in proof of his Divinity, are plainly contained in ver. 7. and 8. From all which, it follows as an undeniable conclusion drawn from the argument of his titles and attributes, that *besides him there is no God*: Yea, as he himself repeats the same conclusion, *There is no God, I know not any*.—But here a heretic might reply, What, not the Father? Is not he God?—No, not the Father, if *CHRIST* the Son, be not God. For “whoever denieth the “Son, denieth the Father also<sup>r</sup>.”—There is no God,

<sup>m</sup> Chap. i. 8. Chap. xxii. 13. <sup>n</sup> *A parte ante*, and *a parte post*; as the schoolmen express it. <sup>q</sup> *John* i. 3. <sup>r</sup> *1 John* ii.

<sup>o</sup> *John* i. 1. <sup>p</sup> *Heb.* i. 8.

but

but the holy and undivided Trinity ; and they that deny a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, do of course deny a God.—The original is more expressive † of this sense than our translation.

Another personal character belonging to Christ is that of *rock*—In the prophet it is given to the supreme God ; for what we render (ver. 8.), *There is no God*, is in the original, *There is no ROCK*. Now, in the New Testament, which is the best interpreter of the Old, the very same title is by the apostle given to Christ ; For “ *that rock*, saith St. Paul, was *CHRIST*.” —Note we also, that here in our lesson, it is the Son, or Second Person in the Sacred Trinity, who is here proving his Divinity ; none having ever questioned the Godhead of the FATHER.

9. *They that make a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses, they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.*

From hence to ver. 21. the vanity of idolatry is exposed, and idolaters convicted of folly, even by their own senses ; *they are their own witnesses* ; if they would but see and know, that is, if they would make use of their senses or reason, they would blush, and be ashamed.

† The Hebrew may be rendered, *without me* (i. e. exclusive of me) *there is no God*, no *Elohim*. For the word *Elohim* being the plural Name of God, and denoting the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, it must follow, that if the Second Person in the *Elohim*, or Trinity, be secluded, and left out, it destroys in effect the very nature of the Godhead. That *Mibbalnothi* may be taken in this sense, to signify *without* as well as *besides*, appears from sundry places, but especially where it is used by Joseph to Pharaoh, Gen. xli. 16. “ *Without me* (for so it should be rendered) God shall give Pharaoh “ *an answer.*” The Divine Nature is but one [*Ex*, one thing], and this one nature subsisting in Three Divine Persons, whoever goes about to divide the essence, or deny one of the Sacred Persons therein, does necessarily deny the whole. So that *without CHRIST* there can be no GOD :—On this proposition the apostle argues, Ephes. ii. 12. “ *At that time ye were without Christ—“ having no hope, and without God in the world”*”

\* See the like expression, chap. xxvi. ver. 4. † 1 Cor. x. 4.  
med,

ined, to fall down to the stock of a tree, to a senseless inanimate *image*.—And what are the pleasures and enjoyments, which worldly men pursue, as *delectable things*, but the idols of their passions? And what is the love of them but downright idolatry; as impious to the full as the worship of stocks and stones; and altogether as vain and *unprofitable*?

10. *Who hath formed a God<sup>u</sup>, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?*

11. *Eboli, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.*

12. *The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint.*

13. *The carpenter stretcheth out his rule: He marketh it out with a line: He fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man;*

Christ foreseeing the disputes which would arise in his own Church concerning his Godhead; as well as the formal idolatry which too many Christians would fall into; he enters again into the argument with idolaters.—And from what is here said, we may draw these two propositions; 1st, That it is a thing absolutely impossible to make a god. 2dly, That, nevertheless, whosoever make to themselves any images, and pay religious worship thereto, do, in effect, make such image a god to themselves, by putting a trust therein; but that such persons will be shamefully disappointed of their hopes, because such idol, not being in itself a god, is utterly incapable of helping or profiting its worshipers.

From the first of these propositions, it will follow, that Christ having in him-

<sup>u</sup> δευς fortis, i. e. an Almighty God.

that it may remain in the house.

14. *He beweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest, he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.*

15. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: For he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.*

16. *He burneth part thereof in the fire: With part thereof he eateth flesh: he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aba, I am warm, I have seen the fire.*

17. *And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.*

18. *They have not known nor understood: For he bath shut their eyes, that*

self all the perfections of the Godhead, must from eternity have been possessed of them, it being impossible to make a god of such infinite perfections, one of which is infinitude itself; and therefore that he is no created being: that it is also as impossible for *Jesus Christ* to be possessed of such perfections, except he were truly and properly God; nothing but the Godhead being capable thereof. Yet our Lord hath said of himself, “All things that the Father hath (*i. e.* all possible perfections of the Divinity) are mine”<sup>w</sup>:—And the apostle affirmeth of him, that “he, being in the FORM OF GOD, thought it no robbery to be equal with God.”<sup>x</sup>—As Son of God, therefore, he cannot be a mere creature, nor a made god: But that, according to our Creed, he is “uncreate, as the Father is uncreate:” Begotten indeed, but not made; being of one substance with the Father; and that “by him all things were made.” Consequentially it is equally absurd to say, he was made or created, as to

*they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.*

19. *And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge, nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire, yea, also, I have baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh, and eaten it, and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

20. *He feedeth of ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

use of images in religious worship is idolatry; yea, therefore idolatry, because a trust and confidence is placed in them, as helps and instruments of religion, which God hath no where appointed, but rather expressly forbidden. So that, whatever the champions of the church of *Rome* may pretend, the very use of pictures and images, as helps of devotion, and books of the unlearned<sup>2</sup>, &c. as Papists call them, is consecrating them to be MEANS OF GRACE, and consequently substituting them in the place of the *Holy Ghost*, whose sole office it is to appoint the means, and confer the gifts, of grace. So that to ascribe to pictures and images such effects as proceed only from him, and are conveyed by those means only, which he hath sanctified and ordained, is that species of idolatry, which is more immediately committed

say, that he made himself;—to make himself, or to make a GOD of infinite perfections, being equally a contradiction and impossible. Hence he putteth the question, *Who bath formed a GOD?* As much as to say, not God himself (with reverence be it spoken) can form such a God; much less can man. Christ was indeed called from the womb, therefore was begotten; but it was from the womb of the morning<sup>1</sup>, i. e. eternity, as Son of GOD; and then from the womb of the blessed Virgin, as Son of man.

From the second proposition, the conclusion that follows is plainly this, that the

against God the HOLY SPIRIT, or the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity ; whereas the worshiping of Angels and Saints, and making intercessors of them, is an act of idolatry more directly and immediately against God the SON, and substituting creatures into his office of Mediator between God and man. From whence it appears, that, in truth, the *Romish* idolatry differs from the heathen no otherwise than in the respective objects of adoration. The *Gentile* offended against the UNITY of the Godhead, by worshiping of many gods instead of the one living and true GOD : The Papist violates the majesty of the holy Trinity, by setting up other objects of religious trust and devotion in the room of the Son and Holy Ghost. We may therefore apply to them what is here said to the heathen idolaters ; *They feed of ashes ; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their soul, nor say Is there not a lye in my right hand ?*

*21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel ; for thou art my servant ; I have formed thee, thou art my servant : O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*

*Jacob*, as to the perfect human nature ; like *Israel*, as a prince prevailing with God. Here, as servant or agent employed of God to reform and judge the world, he is particularly commanded to *remember these*, that is, *these* idolaters. As much as to say, “ Let this be one special part of thy office and commission, when sent to save mankind, that thou destroy all idolatry, and false worship.”—As this is one great end, so be it one glorious effect, of thy coming into the world, to destroy the works of the

Here the Godhead (as is frequent in the prophets <sup>b</sup>), speaks to Christ in his incarnate and mediatorial capacity ; for as such he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made, in the likeness of men <sup>c</sup> ; like

<sup>b</sup> See chap. xli. 8. and chap. lv. 4. <sup>c</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

devil, and abolish the worship of idols. — Let it be remembred also, as a special charge at the great day of retribution, when thou art to judge the world, “ that all idolaters be sentenced to have their part “ with unbelievers, whoremongers, &c. in the lake “ which burneth with fire and brimstone <sup>d</sup>. ”

*22. I have blotted out  
as a thick cloud thy trans-  
gressions, and as a cloud thy  
sins : Return unto me, for  
I have redeemed thee.*

To preserve the harmony and coherence of the context, we may conceive the *Logos*, or divine nature of the Son, speaking on the part and behalf of God, to the *Messiah* in his human nature

as Son of man ; and particularly as head and representative of all mankind ; who had assumed not only the nature, but the whole load of guilt, to which that nature was become obnoxious through sin : That therefore the forgiveness of sin, here promised to him, is that glorious act of grace, which in him, and for him, was granted to all mankind ; and contains the very sum and substance of the gospel, which proclaims a general pardon to all the world, even unto all that *return* to God by a sincere repentance, and faith in Christ. — *Clouds*, especially *thick clouds*, obscure the face of heaven, and hide from us the light and comfort of the sun : So had sin interposed between God and man ; had robbed us of the light of heavenly truth, and overspread the whole world with darkness and horror, universal ignorance, and guilty fears. The coming of Christ dispelled these gross *clouds*, and restored the light of heaven, removed the thick veil of sin, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For he himself is the life, the way, and the truth : He is “ the “ light which lighteth every man that cometh into “ the world : ” And in his light only shall we see the light of divine truth.

<sup>d</sup> Rev. xxi. 8, &c. xxii. 15.

23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

24. Thus saith the LORD thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the LORD that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself:

25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish:

26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to

After so free an act of mercy, and general amnesty, how pertinent, as well as expressive of the divine goodness and philanthropy, is this call of the Spirit to all created Beings, to join together in glad hymns of gratulation and triumph on the redemption of man! GOD himself rejoices, and bids heaven and earth to rejoice, at the happy peace he has made.— And if He, our offended Sovereign and Judge, be so delighted in granting us the pardon; what thanks, what joy, what love, and obedience, is due from man, for so inestimable a benefit, so transcendent a blessing, so great and yet so unmerited a salvation!— But here, again, our faith, which is the sole instrument of applying this pardon to our souls, is excited to the belief of his Divinity, who alone hath mediated and purchased for us this blessed reconciliation with God: That it is the LORD who hath done it; or, which is equivalent, that he who hath done it, is the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is Jehovah the LORD: Yea, our Lord; as Christians, and none but Christians, can say: For he is our Lord in a more

*the temple, thy foundation shall be laid.* a more peculiar manner, as he is our head, and we his members; as we are his

professed subjects and servants; he our Liege Lord and Sovereign. Christ the Captain of our salvation, the author and finisher of our faith, is GOD as well as man: He that redeemed us is the same that *made us*; that *formed us from the womb*; that hath *made all things*; that *stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself*. To confirm this most fundamental article of our faith in the essential and inherent Divinity of our ever-blessed Redeemer, all the divine attributes of almighty power, infinite wisdom, inerrable truth, universal providence, and special mercy in founding and preserving his Church, *saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built*, &c. are ascribed to him, and so often inculcated, not only in our lesson, but in so many other places of the prophets, the psalms, the gospels, and apostolical writings, as an indispensable condition of that pardon and reconciliation, which our dearest Saviour procured, and by his precious blood-shedding hath obtained to us—To conclude, let all his faithful servants, all orthodox members of our holy Church, contend earnestly for this faith of our Lord's essential Divinity, daily saying with her, according to this sense, and full assurance of faith, “Be ye sure that the “LORD [Jesus Christ] is GOD: It is he that hath “made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, “and the sheep of his pasture<sup>d</sup>.”—Yea, “let every “creature, which is in heaven, and on earth, and “under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all “that are in them, say (what the beloved apostle “once heard them all say); Blessing, and honour, “and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon “the throne, and unto the LAMB, for ever and ever<sup>e</sup>. ” Amen, Amen.

<sup>d</sup> *Psal. xcvi.*

<sup>e</sup> *Rev. v. 12*

*The First Sunday after EPIPHANY*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, CH. xlvi.

P R E F A C E.

*T*HIS Chapter immediately foregoing concludes with an invitation from the Saviour to all mankind, to believe in him as GOD; and upon that condition to receive salvation:—*Look unto me, saith he, “and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am “GOD, and there is none else;*”

The success of this call, or preaching the gospel to all nations, and the conversion of men to the faith and worship of Christ, being foretold in the words immediately following [“I have sworn by myself, &c. that unto me “every knee shall bow,” i. e. to me, JESUS, as the apostle expressly applies it.]

Then our Lesson proceeds to shew, that this call and manifestation of Christ to the world would prove the happy means, of restoring the knowledge and worship of the true God among mankind; that therefore the looking unto Jesus, as the Saviour of the world, and bowing the knee to HIM, as our Lord and our GOD, would be so far from idolatry (as it certainly would be the most

<sup>a</sup> Phil. ii. 10.

formal idolatry to pay divine honours to him, were he a creature only), that it should by degrees root out and abolish all kinds of idolatry, and false religion. And this effect of Christianity is here foreshewn by that destruction of the images of Babylon, which should happen on the taking of that city by Cyrus and Darius, who, being enemies to the worship of idols, destroyed all the images they found therein. And by Babylon (as we often find in holy writ) is represented the capital of Satan's kingdom; but Jerusalem is the figure of the true Church, the city of God, and metropolis of the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

By our Lesson then we are taught the same doctrine that St. John gives us in that short precept wherewith he concludes his assertion and proof of our Lord's Divinity;—“ Little children, keep yourselves from idols<sup>b</sup>”; viz. that we should not only keep ourselves from all heathenish superstitions, which we renounced in our baptism; but from that more detestable idolatry, which some have introduced into Christianity, by turning their very Saviour into an idol. The Romanist acknowledges his Divinity, and yet worships him by an image: The Socinian, and Arian, allow him divine honour, and yet deny his Godhead.—Both these practices are contrary to the word and will of God, as appears very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture; but which of them is most absurd, as well as impious, is hard to say: For if Christ be God, why represented by an image, which cannot possibly be like him? If he be a creature only, and not truly God, then to bow the knee, or worship him at all, is manifest idolatry.—And, yet all the Angels of God, as well as every creature in heaven and earth, are commanded to worship him<sup>c</sup>.—No: The great end and design of Christ's incarnation (that great mystery of godliness; as the apostle calls it, GOD manifest in the flesh) was to destroy all such works of the devil, and to establish the true knowledge and religion of God in the world, which consists in the worship and belief of

<sup>b</sup> 1 John v. 21.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. i. 6.

*the ever-blessed TRINITY, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God.—To whom be all glory, adoration, and praise, now, and for ever. Amen.*

### The First SUNDAY after EPIPHANY.

First proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. xlvi.

*BEL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a weary burden to the beast.*

the prophet, in order to expose the vanity of idolatry, shews, that their images, even their great god *Bel*, was so far from being able to defend them, that he could not even save himself: That their famous oracle of *Nebo*<sup>a</sup> could neither prevent nor foresee his own or his worshipers ruin.—*Bel boweth down.*] He that was wont to be bowed to, and adored, is now thrown down to the ground, and forced to bow himself to the victorious army of *Cyrus*.—*Nebo*, whom his deluded votaries were used to cringe to, is now made to *stoop* to the will of the plundering soldier; and all the idols of *Babylon* are removed as common lumber, upon *beasts* and *carriages*; so helpless, as not to be able to save themselves; so lifeless, as to become a *heavy burden* and *dead weight* to the *weary beasts*.

2. *They stoop they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but*

**B**E L or [Baal] was the chief idol of the Babylonians; whose destruction, here, and in the foregoing and following chapters, being foretold, the prophet, or rather Christ in the person of

Cyrus and Darius, when they took *Babylon*, destroyed and carried away all the idols, and rich images, which

<sup>a</sup> Tremellinus renders it, *Deus vaticinans*.

they

*themselves are gone into captivity.* they found in that city ; for they were of a religion which abominated idols —

Herein *Cyrus* was an emblem of *Christ*, as *Babylon* was the emblem of the kingdom of Satan. The prophecy of its fall, and the extirpation of image-worship, hath been accomplished in and through our Lord *Jesus Christ*, where ever his kingdom hath prevailed ; especially where it hath prevailed ; in the heart of true believers. The utter and final destruction of idols, and all idolatry, will happen at our Lord's last and great Epiphany ; when, at the brightness of his coming, *Babylon*, with all its vain superstitions shall fall, and never rise any more.

3. *Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel,* which are *born* by me from the *bely*, which are carried from the *womb*

4. *And even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you.*

all, upholding us in life by the word of his power, and conducting us by his providence from our earliest infancy to our *hoar hairs*, and latest term of *age*. “ It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves<sup>e</sup>. ” Yea, he both made, and hath new made us again ; first, by creation, and then by redemption ; and none shall be able to pluck us out of his hands.—The *womb* of God is the church, the *remnant of Israel* are his children, who are conceived in, and born of her ;

<sup>e</sup> Rev. xviii.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Kings x. 8.

<sup>g</sup> Psal. xcvi.

And

And Christ is that arm of God, which bears, which carries, and will deliver us.

5. *To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?*

*To whom indeed, O blessed Jesu, shall we liken thee? Though thou camest in the likeness of frail man, and didst manifest thyself on*

earth in the appearance of sinful flesh; that was but the veil which concealed thy glory; the tabernacle wherein thou wert pleased to dwell amongst us.<sup>b</sup> But now, with St. Paul must we say, “We know thee ‘SO no more.’” Our faith reaches within the veil; enters into the Holy of Holies; beholds thee no more as man, as one *like* ourselves, but as thou art in thyself, and as thou ever wert, *like* unto GOD, yea, GOD of GOD, Light of Light, very GOD of very GOD, begotten SON, and not a creature made; of one substance with the Father, and by whom all things were made. There is none then we can or may compare thee to, but to thy eternal Father: To him alone may we *liken* thee: To him alone art thou equal in the essential unity of the ever blessed and undivided Trinity. It is true thou didst, as at this time, condescend to assume the Human Nature, and take our likeness upon thee; but it was to the intent thou mightst restore in us that image and likeness of God, which sin had defaced; that divine similitude to thyself, of righteousness and true holiness, wherein we were first created. By this astonishing expedient of mercy, the original beauty of our nature is repaired: Thou becamest like unto US, that we might be made like unto thee again; — again receive thy Divine Image and Superscription. — But to detract from thy essential Divinity on account of this gracious condescension to our misery, and to *compare* thee only to thy own creatures, because of thy great humility and goodness in becoming man, is a piece of

<sup>b</sup> John i. 14.

infidelity,

infidelity, as monstrously ungrateful, as it is blasphemously impious and profane.—O my soul! O my Saviour! far be it from me to harbour such a thought: Let every Christian rather say.

*Hail, Son of God! Saviour of men! Thy Name  
Shall be the copious matter of my song  
Henceforth: And never shall my harp thy praise  
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.*

M I L T O N.

6. *They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.*

7. *They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall be not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can be not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.*

The most probable occasion of idolatry, and the reason why the devil set it up in the world, was, because Christ the son of God was commanded to be worshiped by men and angels.—This command to worship the Son of God,—as some have probably supposed, was the criterion appointed of God for trial of the angels; as a prohibition to taste of the interdicted tree was made the trial of men.—“ When

“ he brought the first-be-

“ gotten into the world, as the apostle speaks,  
“ (i. e. declared him to be his Son, his first and  
“ only-begotten Son) he said, Let all the angels of  
“ God worship him!”—Those angels, who obeyed that divine command, stood, and kept their first estate: those who through their pride refused to worship this Son of God, fell from their station, and were cast out of heaven, as traitors, and rebels, into hell. This it was that kindled in Satan that implacable envy against Christ, which first brought sin

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i.

and

and death into the world, and then contrived that scheme of false religion, and mystery of iniquity, which soon overspread the whole earth with idolatry.—Hence a multitude of false gods, under the character of sons of God, together with their images, were erected into objects of divine worship ;—in imitation of, or rather in opposition to, the worship of the *Messiah*, the only-begotten Son of God. It therefore became this true Son, and only true Image of the Father, to reform this egregious abuse, which the folly of man, and the malice and pride of Satan, had introduced into religion ; and to restore to their proper object the faith and worship of mankind.—In these two verses therefore are represented the strange error and stupidity, as well as profaneness, of paying divine honours to senseless idols, which can neither help themselves, nor others.

8. *Remember this, and shew yourselves men : bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* For man, a living man, to worship an image, an inanimate stock, a creature of his own making, is not only an high offence against the Majesty of God, but a

strange infatuation ; an affront to his own being ; a degrading himself from the dignity of his nature ; a forgetfulness of his high and noble original, from whence he is derived.—To bow to an idol, is to acknowledge it the author of our being ; whereas man is the offspring of the living God, in whom alone we live, and move, and have our being. “ Forasmuch then (as St. Paul reasons) as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man’s device.”—Did we but think what, and from whence, we are ; did we remember to shew ourselves MEN ; we could not be so absurd as to commit any kind of idolatry ; we should never worship any other than God ; we should not be

be such senseless *transgressors*, both against God, and ourselves.

9. Remember the former things of old, <sup>a</sup> for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.

10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are <sup>b</sup> not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

old; that is, to look back into the records of the first and most early ages, even to the beginning of time, and of all created beings. There we shall find but one only supreme GOD, the first cause and author of all things.—If, in all succeeding ages, from that time to this, we attend to the great events that have happened in the world, we shall find them all conducted by the same sovereign power, the same almighty hand; consequently must conclude, there is but one GOD, and *none else*, that he who made and governs the world, is that one GOD, *and none like him*: Especially if we observe, that many of these events were foretold long before they happened: and have been since exactly accomplished, we must conclude these are visible and incontestable proofs of his eternal Power and Godhead; the punctual completion of whatever he hath foretold, most infallibly proving, that he, who so declared the end from the beginning, is the very same GOD; the same divine power effecting what the same wisdom had foreseen and decreed. So that none else but he can say, *My*

<sup>a</sup> Heb. That I am God.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. Not done.

*counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;* because none else but he is Lord of heaven and earth; the sovereign and absolute disposer of all things; whose word is an irrefragable law, whose divine will is fate. In a word, we are hereby taught, not only the use and benefit of history in general, especially that which is contained in the Scriptures; but, by comparing events with the prophecies therein delivered, we must, if sincere, be convinced of the divine authority of those sacred books; and from the exact accomplishment of some predictions, which happened before the closing of the canonical writings, and of others which have since come to pass, conclude with the utmost certainty, that the Scriptures are infallibly true; that they are the word of GOD, and not of man; the word of him alone, who *declares the end from the beginning, and from antient times the things that are not yet done.* To whom therefore be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

11. *Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

3, 4, &c. And the sacking of Babylon by Cyrus is so particularly described by our prophet in the following chapter, as if it were already come to pass. So that the whole is designed as an undeniable evidence, not only of God's sovereign power over the king's and kingdoms of the earth, and that he will *do all his pleasure*; but of that infinite and inerrable foreknowledge spoken of in the preceding verse; so that he,

The historical sense of these words, according to St. Jerom, is this; the descent of Cyrus against Babylon shall be like that of an eagle darting down on its prey. — Conquerors, who over-run and ravage whole countries, are elsewhere compared to birds of prey: See *Ezek. xvii.*

and he alone, can say, as here he doth, *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass: I have purposed it, I will also do it.*—But the mystical sense is plainly applicable to *Christ*; yea, more plainly so in the original, even according to the letter, than to *Cyrus*. For the verbal translation of the Hebrew is, *Calling a bird<sup>P</sup> from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country-* In *Deut.* xxxii. 11. the Lord compares himself to an eagle: In *Matth.* xxxiii. 37. he compares himself to an hen gathering her chickens under her wings; here, to a *bird*, as it were upon the wing, coming *from the east*, the region of light, to bring life and immortality to light, and to rise upon the world with healing in his wings. *Christ* is also the only one that can properly be called, *The man of God's counsel*; for he is the angel of his great counsel; yea, his very Name is *COUNSELLOR<sup>q</sup>*. And by the *far country*, which he is said to be called from, may very well be meant heaven; for so it signifies in *St Luke* xix. 12.—The spiritual meaning then of this, and the two following verses, is clearly this; God promises to send his Son into the world to redeem and save mankind, according to his eternal purpose; and to *place*, or establish in *Zion* (that is, in his Church), the true *righteousness*, the *salvation* of the world, and the *glory* of his Name. In the Church only are these things to be found. And what he hath promised in the prophet, he hath since fulfilled in that Son of his love, whose *Epiphany*, and manifestation in the flesh, we are at this time celebrating in his Church.

12. *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness.*

13. *I bring near my righteousness, it shall not*

*I will place salvation in Zion, &c.]* The Hebrew may more literally be rendered. *I will give in Zion salvation to Israel my glory;* i. e. in the Church only will I grant

<sup>P</sup> Note, *Ravenous* is not in the original.

<sup>q</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

*salvation*

*be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry ; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.*

salvation ; or, as the gospel expresses it, “ Such as should be saved were added to “ the Church.” — *To Israel my glory*, that is, to *Christ*.

But the Father, who giveth not his honour to another, would not give it to Christ, were not Christ God as well as Man. Christ indeed is [*Alius*, but not *aliud*], another Person, not another Thing. This version is favoured by the translation of the seventy elders, who render it, I have given in *Sion*, “ *Salvation to Israel, for glorying* ; *i. e.* that he may be glorified.—Even the human nature in Christ was assumed into a participation of divine worship and glory.

*Δεδωκα ἐν Σιών σωτηρίᾳ τῷ Ισραὴλ εἰς δόξασμα.*

## The Second Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lessons for M. P. ISAIAH, Ch. li.  
E. P. ————— Ch. liii.

### P R E F A C E.

**I**N the first of these lessons, the divinity of Christ is most expressly affirmed by the name or style of the Arm of the LORD, on whom the Isles, (that is the Gentiles) shall trust: And by the very same name he is described, in the fifty-third chapter, as suffering for the sins of the world: So that the plain intent and design of the church, on this day, is to confirm our faith more and more in that grand fundamental concerning the two natures of Christ; which, as was observed on her last Sunday's lessons, the church, at this Epiphany season, more professedly instructs us in, according to the second of her thirty nine articles, and the Athanasian creed, that "He is perfect GOD and perfect Man,"—both the Creator and Redeemer of his people.

### The Second SUNDAY after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chapter li.

An Exhortation to Faith in Christ as G O D; the Lawgiver, Redeemer, and Saviour, of his Church.

1. *H*earken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek

A L L are commanded to hear CHRIST, the great prophet of God; but

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xviii. 18, 19. Mat. xvii. 5.

*the LORD ; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn ; and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged.*

none are capable of faith in him,—but those who *follow after righteousness* ; that is, who are studious of virtue, and men of upright minds.

They who seek *righteousness*, are, in effect, seeking the Lord Christ ; for he is<sup>b</sup> righteousness itself. These as men in earnest, when seeking what they love and desire, will not only *follow after* what they seek, but *hearken* for a kind voice to direct their search aright. They know, and gladly hear, the voice of Christ : They have ears to hear the glad tidings of salvation ; and will therefore readily embrace it : For so we read in the gospel, *Mark* xii. 37. “The people heard him ‘gladly ;’ and in the *Acts*, chap. xiii. “As many ‘as were ordained (that is, disposed) to salvation, ‘were daily added to the church.”

*Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn.]* Here Christ, having bespoken their attention, first addresses himself to the *followers after righteousness* ; that is, the candidates of virtue and innocence, either among the *Gentiles*, who sought it in their moral philosophy ; or among the *Jews*, who sought it by the works of the law : To both these he points out the right and sure way of attaining to righteousness; namely, by faith in Him. *Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn.* “This ‘rock is Christ,” saith St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. x.—“He is ‘the rock whence cometh our salvation,” saith the *Psalmist*. He is also the rock *whence we are hewn* ; that is, we derive not only our being from him, as he is the Maker of all things, but receive from him that similitude and likeness to God, wherein we were made ; for he is the express image of the Father, and we of Him.—But that we may not fall from this faith, and lapse into pride, as our first parents did, the Saviour points out also the necessity of humility ; by add-

<sup>b</sup> *Jer.* xxxiii. 16.

<sup>c</sup> See my remark on the seventeenth chapter of St. *John*, in *Scripture-doctrine of Christ's Divinity*.

ing,—*Look to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged*; by the *pit*, intimating to us (we may presume) that depth of misery, into which we had fallen by sin and disobedience; and from whence we have, as it were, been *digged out* by the hands of our merciful Redeemer. In which expressions also we figured to us, both the nature and extent of that salvation our Lord hath wrought for us; namely, a double deliverance; first, from death, implied in the words *digged out*, as from a grave; secondly, from captivity and bondage, intimated by *the hole of the pit*, or dungeon.—In a word, the happy consequence of our redemption by Christ is here represented to be life and liberty: And the return due to him, for such his unspeakable gift, is a steadfast faith on that rock; an humility proportioned to the misery we were plunged into by sin; with a grateful and affectionate sense of our deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God<sup>a</sup>, and a life conform to that image whereunto we were restored, and created anew after God, of righteousness and true holiness<sup>c</sup>.

*2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

“ lieved God, and it was counted unto him for righ-  
“ teousness.” And for this cause he is called “ the  
“ Father of the faithful.”—But none are admitted  
to that privilege of being the children of faithful  
*Abraham*, but such as *look unto Sarah that bare them*. As *Abraham* is the emblem of Christ, *Sarah* is of the church: These are the parents of the promised seed  
“ nor can any one have GOD for his Father, who

The Greeks sought righteousness by wisdom: and philosophy, the Jew by the works of the law; but the only way to attain it, is faith; such a faith as was that of *Abraham*, who “ be-

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. iv. 24.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. iv. 11. 16.

“ hath

" hath not the church for his mother<sup>g</sup>?"—And what can strengthen our faith more, than to observe the admirable parallel wherein these types do correspond to Christ, and his church?—Sarah was both the wife and sister of Abraham: So Christ calls his church, his "sister, his spouse<sup>h</sup>." Sarah was "the daughter of Abraham's father but not the daughter of his mother; and she became his wife<sup>i</sup>." So Christ and his church are begotten of the same Father; but then the church is not the daughter of his mother the Virgin Mary, as the Papist would seem to make her. The church he has espoused by an holy covenant, and made her bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh.—" This (faith the apostle) is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church<sup>k</sup>." And from this sacred, this mystical, marriage of Christ and his church, are born the true Israelites, the holy seed, the children of God: " For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren!"

*I call him alone<sup>m</sup>.*] In this call of Abraham we are taught two things; first, the example of his ready obedience, and especially of that faith, which was imputed to him for righteousness and, secondly, that wonderful instance of Gods goodness and power, who from one man, and both him and his wife old, and passed hopes of children, raised such a numerous issue, contrary to all human expectation; that therefore the objects of faith, and goods of grace are above the reach of nature, and not to be measured by the line of reason, or any human powers.—A genuine faith, that has the word of God for its foundation, finds nothing difficult in what he commands; nothing doubtful in what he promises; nothing incredible in what he re-

<sup>g</sup> Cyprian. de Un. Eccles. Habere jam nemo potest Deum Patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem.      <sup>h</sup> Cant. iv.      <sup>i</sup> Gen. xx. 12.

<sup>k</sup> Ephes. v. 32.      <sup>l</sup> Heb. ii. 11.      <sup>m</sup> The Hebrew is, I called him one: And the Greek version expresses it well, *He was one, and I called him*.

veals. For so *Abraham*, the father and pattern of our faith, "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken (to wit, the word and promise of God), So shall thy seed be"; and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of *Sarah's* womb. He staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith; giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform. So likewise *Sarah* herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child, when she was passed age, because she judged him faithful who had promised; therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude; and as the sand which is by the sea-shore, innumerable."—This extraordinary and supernatural effect of *Abraham* and *Sarah's* faith, denotes the wonderful efficacy of faith, as well as the great goodness and power of God, who rewarded their belief with so numerous a posterity: That therefore, as he gave them a son, contrary to the common course of nature, and all human expectation, and multiplied their seed so exceedingly; so all true believers may be fully assured, both of his will and power to bless and multiply to them the manifold gifts of grace and mercy.

3. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness

The first completion of this prophecy was in the restoration of the Jews from their Babylonish captivity; but the promise ultimately and chiefly respects the Christian church, which in this world sojourns in a wil-

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xv. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xi.

derness,

*ness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

*dernes*, as the *Israelites* had done, before they entered their *Promised land*: But this wildernes is not without its

comforts; the righteous, even in this world, enjoy that peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which no man nor sufferings can take from them. Although their secular enjoyments of “ houses and brethren, and “ sisters and mothers, and children and lands, be “ with persecutions; yet, by our Lord’s own computation, the gains they receive is an overflowing surplusage of profit, no less than an hundred-fold, even now, at this time; and in the world to come, “ eternal life.” Their happiness shall then be perfect and unmixed;—their *wildernes* be turned into *Eden*; and this *desert* into *the garden of the Lord*: Then shall we regain an happier paradise than that we lost; all pains and tears will be turned into *joy and gladness*; and all sighing and sorrow into *thanksgiving, and the voice of melody*.

4. *Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.*

Christ here seemeth to speak the Jewish nation in general; in like manner as he doth in the fiftieth Psalm, “ Hear, O my people,” &c. and to warn them beforehand, to expect another law, beside that which they had received by Moses; and

that too, not by man, or the disposition of angels, as the first was, but from Himself, from God immediately, and in person,—*A law shall proceed from Me*. So *Isaiah ii. 5.* and *Micah iv. 5.* “ Out of “ *Zion* shall go forth a law, and the Word of the “ *LORD from Jerusalem*.”—And this *law* (which is no other than the gospel, called therefore of Christ, *My Judgment*) shall *rest for a light of the people*; that

is, shall remain for ever : As the ultimate and most perfect revelation of the divine will to man, it shall never be annulled or repealed ; shall never admit of any change or dissolution, as the first law or covenant of works (whereof the law of *Moses* was only a specimen) was to undergo ; but shall rest and be a perpetual law (called therefore the everlasting gospel<sup>4</sup>) to govern and direct the church to the end of the world ; yea, to all eternity.—To the same purpose, see what hath been said on these words, chap. xxv. 10. “ In the mountain shall the hand of the LORD ‘ rest,’ ” Third Sunday in *Advent*.

5. *My righteousness is near : my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people : the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.*

“ was at hand ?”—And if this King of Righteousness was then so *near*, and justice had laid the ax to the root of the tree ; if his *arms* were then lifted up, *to judge the people*, and ready to pronounce sentence upon the ungodly and the sinner : how ought we now to tremble at the much nearer approach of his judgment !—But faith can “ rejoice against judgment ;” Faith finds hope even in death ; she reads danger indeed, but safety too, in these awful words, *Mine arms shall judge the people, and on mine arm shall they trust.*—These *arms* of thine, O Holy Jesus, are thy justice, and thy mercy ; while the one is lifted up to strike, faith beholds the other stretched out to save : She sees thee a Judge, but a Redeemer too.—Thus, while judgment lingereth not, but is *near* enough to awaken our fears, our redemption also draweth nigh, to animate our hopes. Thus righteousness and peace, ju-

*My righteousness is near : ]*

What is this, but the voice of our Lord *Jesus* preaching here by his prophet, what he afterwards proclaimed by his immediate forerunner, St. *John* the Baptist, That

“ the kingdom of heaven

<sup>4</sup> *Rev.* xiv. 6.

stice and mercy, go hand-in-hand ; thus they meet together, and centre in our adorable Redeemer ; They are now so firmly reconciled, by that all sufficient atonement he hath made, that the *salvation* purchased for us, by his mercy, shall remain fixed and unalienable for ever : And yet his justice shall not be *abolished* nor infringed ; as by his prophet he signifies to us in the verse following.

6. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath : for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment ; and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner : but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.*

This also the same God, our Saviour, hath repeated in his gospel, and on the same occasion.—“ Heaven “ and earth shall pass away ; “ but my words (faith He) “ shall not pass away.” Matthew xxiv. 35.—These are the words of grace and tru' h which came by Jesus Christ : Of grace to the humble and penitent ; of truth to all :

He will ever be true to his

promise of mercy, and also to the awards of his justice ; and that in so just a proportion, and with such perfect equity, that mercy shall not intrench upon justice, nor justice *abolish* the least grain of mercy.—In this life, indeed, these divine attributes vary their objects ; visiting sometimes one man, sometimes another ; yea, oftentimes, alternately, and by turns, they visit the same person : But, as they shall outlast this world, and be *for ever*, when these material *heavens* and *earth* are passed away, and all that dwell upon the earth are dead *in like manner*<sup>1</sup> ; then shall mercy and justice remain fixed and unchangeable *for ever* ; salvation eternal resting on the vessels of mercy ; eternal destruction on the objects of his justice.

<sup>1</sup> That is, at the last day ; for then only will it happen, that all who dwell on the earth, will die *in like manner*.

*7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.*

Here Christ calls on a third sort of persons, who are advanced to an higher degree of virtue; men who KNOW righteouſness; a people in whose HEART are his laws: And who are these, but his own peculiar ones; those who are called by his name, and obey, from the heart, the law of his covenant? theſe he bespeaks as ſoldiers liſted under his banner, diſciplined to fight manfully againſt his enemies, and prepared for battle,—*Fear ye not, &c.* These are all lovers of Jesus; and “this perfect love ‘caſteth out all fear.’”—And if divine love can look on the very terrors of the Lord without terror, well may it swallow up all other fears, and, like fire, conveit them into itſelf; well may it arm us againſt the vain terrors of the world, the reproačes and revilings of men; yea, againſt the sharpeſt afflictions of life, or torments of death.

*8. For the moth ſhall eat them up like a garment, and the worm ſhall eat them like wool: but my righteouſness ſhall be for ever, and my ſalvation from generation to generation.*

The severest, the longest persecutions of this life, muſt have an end; and ſo will their authors too: And what need he fear, who is ſure his ſhort conflict will end in victory? Do but love, and that will banish all fear and all impatience; do but believe, and that will ensure a triumph: For this is “the victory that overcometh the world, even our “faith.”—Faith gives us arms, and conqueſt too. Love inspires with courage, and beſtows the crown.

The Church ſpeaks.

*9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the*

Here Christ calls on a third ſort of persons, who are ad- vanced to an higher degree of virtue; men who KNOW righteouſness; a people in whose HEART are his laws:

And who are these, but his

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“faith.”—Faith gives us arms, and conqueſt too.

Love inspires with courage, and beſtows the crown.

In return to the preceding threefold invitation of Christ to his church, to trust in Him, the church, with pious

*LORD; awake as in the antient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?*

10. *Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?*

11. *Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

than *Egypt*, a fiercer *dragon* than *Pharaoh*; that he would open a passage for his redeemed, of more consequence than that through the *Red-sea*, even a passage from earth to the heavenly *Canaan*; yea, that he would make the very *depths* of hell a safe and practicable *way for his ransomed to pass over*. For this reason, and by these paths, in which our Lord hath gone before us, shall *the redcemed of the Lord return, and come with singing unto Zim; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

### Christ's Answer.

12. *I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man*

ardency, and an holy kind of impatience, as conscious of her own natural weakness, calls on Him also (even thrice she calls on him) to *awake, and put on his strength.* —As yet he had visited her in visions: She invokes him now, by his known name, of the *Arm of the LORD*, to *awake, and put an end to those dark shadows of visionary representations in types and figures;* and that he would appear visibly, and in person, for the deliverance of his people; that he would hasten his incarnation and promised appearance in the flesh, in order to *cut, or subdue, a more powerful enemy*

Note here the gracious answer of Christ to the foregoing address of the Church, yea, the whole Trinity is introduced, as dispensing comfort to his people; *I even I, am He that comforteth*

which shall be made as grass?

13. And forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

eth you. The Father saith, I; the Son saith, I; the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from both, is He, that bringeth and is, our comfort. How just then, and yet how kind and endearing, is the reproof that follows, *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid,* &c.—When the whole Trinity is engaged in our defence; when infinite goodness is become our security, and Almighty power is on our side; we cannot but be safe: If God be for us, who is he that can harm us?—The first incursions of violence and oppression may surprise; but the longest continuance of it ought not to dishearten or deject—Every degree of natural fear is a defect of faith.—The infirmity of our flesh, and human frailty, may, indeed, excuse all sudden fears: But to fear continually, and every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready, or able, to destroy, is to forget the Lord our Maker.—He that made, is surely willing to save: He that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, is surely able to protect us.—Such a continued, and incessant, fear, is an indignity to God, argues a total defect of faith, and admits of no excuse. To be afraid of a man that shall die, is idle and vain: To distrust the power and goodness of God, is to fear him less than man; and therefore impious and profane. O my God, I confess my frailty; when dangers arise, my heart is a mere coward: O heal and forgive my unworthy fears; that, at least, I may say, with the holy Psalmist, “ Though I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee.”

Worldlymen, as our Lord

14. The captive exile hast-  
enest that he may be loosed, hath observed, are generally  
wiser in their generation,

<sup>“</sup> Psalm lvi.

than

*and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.*

15. *But I am the LORD thy God that divided the sea, whose waves roared : the LORD of hosts is his Name.*

where life or liberty is concerned, they hasten, and immediately set all their wits on work, and use their utmost efforts to escape the evils they fear, that they may not *die in the pit, nor their bread fail* : But, alas ! how apt are Christians to sink under much lesser dangers ; to be frightened at every difficulty that occurs in the way of their duty ; to lie down and despair, although the Almighty himself, *that divided the sea, &c.* hath engaged his word to save them ; and is ever ready at hand to assist and deliver them !—How unaccountable, how unbelieving, are such fears ; and yet how common !

16. *And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth ; and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.*

veil of flesh ; which having no power or light in itself, did, as it were, cover and obscure the glory, the omnipotence, and divinity, of his Person. He is also the hand and arm of his God, by which the greatest events that ever happened, yea, three of the noblest works of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, have been

These words are spoken immediately of God to the Son : He is the grand prophet, whom God was to raise up, Deut. xviii. 18. In whose mouth he put all his words : He is the very Word of the Father. He was covered in the shadow of his hand ; i. e. concealed in a

\* Luke xvi. 8.

accomplished :

accomplished: First, the *planting* the heavens with angels, and glorified spirits in the room of those who fell away, and kept not their first estate: Secondly, the *laying the foundations of the earth*; and creating the world, and all things therein: Thirdly, the redemption of mankind, and planting a church upon earth:—To which church also, and to all such as are in Christ, these words are mediately and indirectly spoken.—In their *mouths*, and especially in the mouths of the clergy, are now put the oracles of God: They are *covered*, not only as God's secret ones, and their full worth and excellence hidden, and unknown to the world, but they are under the constant *shadow*<sup>x</sup>, and immediate protection, of his Almighty hand. By them also he *plants the heavens* with an holy color of blessed inhabitants, the souls of saints, and just men made *perfect*: By them he establishes the foundations of the earth, and upholds, for their sakes, the state of the world; by them he builds and propagates his church; and *faith unto Zion, Thou art my people*.—Christians are the peculiar people of Christ; they bear his Name, his Image and Superscription: Their life and example, their zeal in good works, should also resemble their Lord's, and be daily employed in carrying on the great design which he came upon, of promoting the salvation of all men.

17. *Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.*

18. There is *none to guide her among all the sons whom we have brought*

(verse 9.) called upon Christ (as did afterwards his disciples, in a storm, *Luke viii. 24.*) to *awake*, and *put on* his *strength*, to save and deliver her: Here our Lord calls upon *her* to *awake*, and *stand up*.—By which we may learn, it is not He that *sleeps*, but we.—“He that

<sup>x</sup> *Psalm xcii.*

“keepeth

*forth: neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up.*

19. *These two things are come unto thee: who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?*

20. *Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.*

"keepeth *Israel*, neither slumbers nor sleeps." He may defer but never neglects, the safety of his people: He will, in his own due time, appease the storm, and remove the danger.—What God saith here to *Jerusalem*, is plain, according to the literal sense: It describes her desolation and captivity; and promises an happy issue to all her troubles.—But, according to the mystical sense; we may observe in this (as St. *Jerom*, and others, instruct us) an admirable figure of what passes between

God and the soul, when, after a long lethargy in sin, and stupefaction of conscience, she is roused at length, by repentance, to a sense of her misery; and awakened, at the call of Christ, to see and abhor her former disorders: Then, and not till then, she finds, and feels, the golden cup of *Babylon* (*Rev. xvii. 4.*), i.e. the filthy, but enchanting pleasures of sin, to be, indeed, a *cup of fury*, *the very dregs of the cup of Trembling*:—But then, the Blessed Physician of the soul takes this cup out of her hand, and suffers her to drink no more.—It has wrought a proper effect; it has brought her to life; and then he administers a cordial:—This cordial is himself.—*I, even I, am He that comforteth you.* And he is a cordial indeed:—Yea he himself drank of the bitter potion, that we may drink it no more again. And, indeed, it was his drinking of it, that perfected the cure.—He took the *cup of trembling*, the cup of divine wrath, out of

<sup>r</sup> Two things;] to wit, in effect; namely, *famine* and *sword*; the first whereof causeth *desolation*; the latter, *destruction*.

our hand, and has given us, in the room of it, the cup of blessing and salvation

21. Therefore bear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine.

22. Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, and thy God<sup>z</sup>, that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again.

23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee: which have said to thy soul, Bow down that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over.

spiritual enemies; and to be made a public street to them that went over; namely, the world, by its temptations,

<sup>z</sup> Thy Lord, the L O R D, and thy God.] Doth not this describe the Sacred Trinity of Persons in the Godhead?—*Thy Lord* seems to be the title of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, by a special and appropriate style, is called by the church, Our Lord.—*The L O R D*, may well be meant of the Father who is emphatically styled, *The Lord*, as First Person and Fountain of the Deity: And, thirdly, *Thy God*, that pleadeth the cause of his people, may properly denote the person of the Holy Ghost: whose office seems to be defined of Παρακλητος; as he is the comforter and pleader of and for all believers in Christ; making intercession for them (as St. Paul speaks\*) with groanings which cannot be uttered, i. e. assists our devotions; and so pleadeth the cause of his people, by holy and fervent aspirations of heart; which are ever the most prevalent with God.

\* Romans viii.

insults,

insults, and persecutions ; the flesh, by its lusts, and vile affections ; the devil, by his wiles, and diverse temptations. These are the enemies we have to conflict with ; and are too often supplanted by, and smitten down to the ground, trampled upon and defiled.

*The Second Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. liii.

P R E F A C E.

**I**N this Lesson, Christ is chiefly exhibited to our faith, as a true and perfect man, and the Redeemer of man. it describes the state and circumstances of his sufferings so exactly, that it seems rather an history of his passion than a prophecy. And it is so undeniable a proof of the truth of Christianity, that the bare reading of it, and comparing it with the gospel-history, hath converted some unbelievers, and brought them home again to the faith and religion of Jesus Christ \*.

*The Second Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. liii.

i. *WHO bath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

**I**N the foregoing chapter, the prophet foretold the great blessings of the gospel, the success it should meet

\* *Converted some unbelievers*. Particularly the Earl of Rochester (see his life by Dr. Furnet, and Parsons's sermon), and Sir John James; the account of which was related to me by the Bishop of ~~Gl-~~, who was well acquainted with Sir John.

2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

revealed?—And lest we Christians also should fall “after the same example of unbelief<sup>b</sup>,” the Holy Ghost, even the same Spirit who dictated this prophecy to *Isaiah*, applies it by the evangelist to our Lord JESUS CHRIST<sup>c</sup>, with this additional remark (to obviate any possible objection), “These things said *Esaias*, when he saw his glory, and spake of him<sup>d</sup>.”—On comparing these Scriptures together, we cannot but observe both the natures of Christ very plainly asserted, and, in consequence thereof, his two states described, of humiliation and exaltation; the first belonging to his human, the other to his Divine Nature. Both the prophet, and the evangelist, saw his Divinity (which the latter calls his glory) through the veil of his flesh: All true believers see it also, and are not offended at the mean appearance, contempt, and sufferings, which attended his incarnation, and state of humanity: But the proud Jew, and unbelieving Christian, looking on his human nature only, and his state of humiliation, and

with among the Gentiles, and the triumphs of the Messiah (whom he there calls “the arm<sup>a</sup> of the Lord”) over the kings of the earth:—But foreseeing the incredulity of his own people the Jews, and their prejudice to Jesus Christ, on account of the meanness of his birth, and his humble appearance amongst them, he breaks out into this passionate exclamation;—Who bath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD

<sup>a</sup> Verse 10.   <sup>b</sup> Heb. iv. 11.   <sup>c</sup> John xii. 38.   <sup>d</sup> Ver 41.   not

not on his glory or GODHEAD also, for want of the eye of faith, they *see no form nor comeliness in him*; and when they thus *see him*, with the eye of flesh only, or the mere light of reason, there is no beauty that they should desire him.—Worldly minds see nothing amiable in Christ. His greatest beauty, which, to us men, lies in his humanity and sufferings, is no beauty to them; but is rather a matter of aversion or disdain, than of love or desire. They believe not the prophets and apostles concerning him, because the *arm of the LORD*, the divine power and wisdom, which informs and actuates this *arm*, is not revealed to them.—They, judging by their outward senses only, and carnal prejudices, conceive all sufferings to be real evils, and marks of divine displeasure.—They distinguish not between the cause of sufferings, which is sin, and the person of the sufferer, who may be dear to God. Such doubtless was the case of the holy and innocent Jesus, who was the Lamb without spot, and suffered as a sacrifice in our stead (and a sacrifice, we know, was always to be without blemish, and perfectly free from the guilt of those sins for which it suffered). Hence it comes to pass, that such men revile and blaspheme his sufferings; they esteem him smitten of God, and justly afflicted, as a sinner, yea, as a malefactor. They despise and reject him; they hide their faces from him, when tendered to them in the sacred ministries of religion; they despise him, as a man only, a mere contemptible man; they esteem him not, as he is in himself the Son of God Most High; or as he is to us, our ever-blessed Redeemer, our Lord, and our GOD.—How blind a creature is man without faith! he has eyes and sees not, sees nothing but what is human, earthly, gross. Sees Christ as Man, but not as GOD; sees him manifested in the flesh, but not GOD manifested in that flesh. He sees and feels his own misery, but not the help or remedy which this *arm of the Lord* holds forth to him:

He

He observes lying vanities, but forfaketh his own mercy \*.

4. *Surely he bath borne our griefs; and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

5. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

8. *He was taken from prison, and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

9. *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with*

The sufferings of Christ are here so plainly described by the prophet, that they cannot with any colour of reason be applied to any other person, as some heretics would fain persuade us; especially, if we attend to the three following considerations, which in the strongest and most positive terms are affirmed of Christ. First, That he suffered FOR man: 2dly, That he suffered BY man: And, 3dly, That he bare what man deserved to have borne and suffered.

By the first is asserted the satisfaction which Christ hath made for the sin of the world; and this is repeated over and over again, in different expressions, but of the same import, as a truth of the utmost consequence to confirm our faith, and cure our guilty fears. For thus the prophet dwells on this heavenly theme, and so often strikes that sweetest of all notes to an humble penitent's ears, the plenary satisfaction, propitiation, and atonement, which Christ hath made for the sins of the

\* Jon. ii. 8.

*the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him, bath put him to grief:—*

*“ himself]; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he bath put him to grief.”—“ By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.” — “ He bath poured out his soul unto death and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”*

Secondly, He suffered by man. This appears also from the whole tenor of the chapter; especially where it is said, “ *When we shall see him, there is no beauty (such as carnal men admire, of pomp and worldly grandeur) that we should desire him.*” And this was verified by what the Evangelist observes, “ *He came to his own, and his own received him not.*”— Again, “ *He is despised and rejected of men: We hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*”— “ *He was wounded by our transgressions; he was bruised by our iniquities.*”— “ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted;*”— unjustly accused by his enemies; betrayed, forsaken, and denied, by his friends; brought as a lamb to the slaughter; haled as the worst of malefactors to crucifixion, and worried by the tumultuary clamours of priests and people to an ignominious accursed death.—*Yet he opened not his mouth, to recriminate his adversaries, or to defend himself.*—And *as a sheep before her shearers (those implacable spoilers of his innocence and life) is dumb; so he openeth not his mouth,*— either in complaints against God or them, but in a most charitable

whole World:— “ *The chastisement of OUR peace was laid upon him, and with his stripes WE are healed.*”— “ *He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth [therefore he suffered not for*

<sup>¶</sup> *John i. 11. § So the Hebrew; and the Greek is διὰ, because of. intercession*

intercession to God for them : “ Father, forgive them, “ for they know not what they do.”—How can we read or think of this without the utmost indignation at such inhuman treatment of so innocent, so great a Person, the Holy one, the Son, the only Son of God, our friend, our best friend, the lover of souls, the Saviour of the world!—But, alas! are we not all accessory to this horrid tragedy, to this barbarous treatment of the blessed JESUS? Yes, *He was wounded by OUR transgressions, &c.* Our sins were not only the material, but the instrumental, cause of all his sufferings.—How ought this to cut us to the heart, and raise an holy indignation against ourselves, for the hand we also have had in those cruel wounds and bruises which our dear Redeemer underwent! How much more should we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes, when we reflect on the wounds, which our iniquities daily give him, and by which he is crucified afresh, and put again to an open shame! Especially, if we consider, lastly,

Thirdly, That he suffered what we deserved to have suffered.—Was he despised and rejected of men? Was he hated and reviled, betrayed and denied, persecuted and oppressed, accused and condemned, scourged and crucified? Yea, moreover, was he forsaken of God, given up to an amazing agony, to death, and to hell? These were the things, these the penalties and pains, which every one of us deserved to have undergone, and yet he endured them for us. *He took on him the iniquities of us all;* both our sin, and our punishment; our guilt, and our sufferings; that so, by suffering and dying in our stead, he might make that atonement to the infinite justice of God, which was not in our power to do—Were man to suffer for himself, he must suffer for ever; but Christ suffering once for all, hath satisfied, and paid a sufficient ransom for all.—How good and gracious must he be, who endured so much for our sakes! how great must

the dignity of his Person be, how infinite the merit of his sufferings, which could atone for and discharge an infinite debt!

— *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

11. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities.*

The soul of Christ was made an offering for sin, when in his agony, in the garden, it became exceeding sorrowful even unto death; when on the cross it was forsaken of God; and when it descended into hell<sup>b</sup>. These sufferings were from the immediate hand of God; and these were doubtless the greatest our Lord endured; but they were also the last.—[He suffered

indeed in both body and soul, because we had sinned in both; and so was made a whole burnt-offering to God for the sins of the whole world.]— Now follows the success of his bitter, but meritorious passion; the happy effects of which are described to us in the ensuing words.— “ *He shall see his seed:*”— “ *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied:*”— “ *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.*”— Now to *justify*, in Scripture-language, is to acquit the sinner from the sentence of condemna-

<sup>b</sup> Not that the soul of Christ suffered any pain there; but, as such an act of extreme humiliation was a real suffering; according to that complaint of the *Psalmt*, who in the person of Christ beweans the deplorable lowness of his condition. “ My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto hell. I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit, and I have been even as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded, and lie in the grave. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in the place of darkness, and in the deep \*.”— And that our excellent church would have us to understand this of Christ, appears by her choice of this psalm for one of her *proper psalms on Good-Friday*; yea, as the last of them, and that too for the *Evening Service*, computing, as it were, that time to be the time of our Lord’s descending into hell.

\* *Psalm lxxxviii.*

tion (which had passed upon all mankind in our first parent *Adam*), and thereby to discharge the criminal both from guilt and punishment. This our Lord hath done for all men, by *bearing their iniquities*, and, in their stead, suffering the penalty of the law, death. Our Lord did thus *justify* all mankind : He suffered for, and so redeemed, the whole world. But then the salvation, which he hath purchased for all, is applied, and made effectual, only by faith. For this reason it is added, That *by his knowledge he justifies MANY*, i. e. as many as receive the knowledge of him by faith, and such as he knows will believe his word.—Though the ransom he pays, be sufficient for all, it is effectual to none but those who repent, and believe the gospel. These though *many*, yet are not all ; and why all are not saved, who have been redeemed, is wholly owing to their own fault, and neglect of so great salvation. From hence we may observe, that there are two kinds of justification ; one effected by the *sufferings* of Christ, which extends to all ; the other by his *knowledge*, which extends to believers only. The one acquits from the guilt of original sin ; the other from personal transgressions, and actual sins. The first is signified above, verse 6, where it is said, *The LORD hath laid on him the iniquities of US all* ; the latter here, in verse 11th, where it is said, *He shall justify many*<sup>1</sup>—The first is an act of free grace, the other is conditional, being on the terms of repentance and faith ; and consequently is the proper effect of *knowledge*. For how can we repent of our sins, if we know them not ? And how can we know them, but by the law of God that forbids them<sup>k</sup> ? How can we believe in the Son of God, except we know him through the gospel that hath revealed him, and by the illumination of his Holy Spirit, who gives us light to see him ? So St.

<sup>1</sup> See the like distinction in Rom. v. 18, 19. <sup>k</sup> So St. Paul reasons, Rom. vii. 7, &c.

*Paul* speaks, “ God hath revealed them unto us by “ his Spirit<sup>1</sup>.

Hence also we learn the meaning of the ordinary and extraordinary grace of God. The first is general, and given to *all*, in consequence of Christ's universal redemption, to use, and to profit withal, if so be they reject it not by wilful acts of sin, and offend against the dictates of natural conscience. The other is bestowed on Christians only, using the means appointed, and conforming themselves to the image of him in whom they profess to believe. So that from hence we may likewise understand those sayings, That Christ “ lighteth every man that cometh into “ the world:” That “ he taketh away the sin of the “ world:” That “ he hath made satisfaction for the “ sins of the whole world.” All which plainly shews, that the redemption of mankind, which we have called the First Justification, is, as our church also holds, universal, and not partial: But the saving effect of redemption, which we have called the Second Justification, is, on the contrary, partial, and not universal; being an act of mercy conferred indeed on *many*, but not on *all*; and limited by certain conditions to such persons only, who enter into covenant with God, and perform those conditions. And none are excluded from the benefit of this justification, but those who wilfully refuse it, when sufficiently made known to them.—As for infants dying baptized or unbaptized, they have the benefit of the general redemption; and so have all those who never heard of Christ, if so be they themselves are not found to obstruct it by wilfully offending against the law of conscience.—“ O “ the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and “ knowledge of God<sup>m</sup>, whose grace that bring- “ eth salvation, hath thus appeared unto ALL “ men<sup>n</sup>!”

<sup>1</sup> *1 Cor. ii. 10.*

<sup>m</sup> *Rom. xi. 33.*

<sup>n</sup> *Titus ii. 11.*

12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong : because he hath poured out his soul unto death : and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many<sup>o</sup>, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The words, *I will divide him a portion with the great*, may be rendered more literally, and therefore more agreeably to the Hebrew, *I will bestow many upon him*, or, *I will give him a share [or possession] in many*. To this sense the Septuagint version agrees<sup>p</sup>, and then it exactly corresponds to what went before, that he should

*justify* (or save) many ; and is equivalent to what is said in the second *Psalm*, “I will give him the heat” then for his inheritance ;” and to those sayings of Christ in the gospel, “No man can come unto me, “except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him<sup>r</sup>.” And again, “Thou hast given him [the Son] power “over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as

\* St. John seems to cite from hence that saying of *John Baptist*. chap. i. 29. The Lamb of God “that taketh away the sins of the “world,” τὸν ἀμαρτίας in the singular number, i. e. original sin ; as we have noted on *Jer.* xxxi. and on Archbishop *Leighton’s* sermon viii. p. 137. It is very observable, that both the prophet, and the gospel, express these two parallel places in the singular number, not sins, in the plural number, but in the singular number, *the S I N of many*, and *s I N* of the world. By which we may be confirmed in that doctrine, that hereby is meant original sin, in which all mankind was involved by the fall of our first parent. But withal we are to note this difference, that although Christ doth both, it is with a limitation : The gospel assures us, that he taketh away the sin of the *whole* world ; so that no man shall be condemned (now that he hath made the atonement) for the sin of *Adam*, but for the personal sins of men. Though the pardon of the first be universal, and extends to all that descend from *Adam* ; yet all will not receive the benefit of that absolution, because of unbelief, and their own actual transgressions. To these will be imputed, not only their own particular sins, but the guilt also of original sin, which will rest upon all who neglect to apply to Christ, to bear it for them, and to take it away. But with respect to those who do believe in Christ, it is here said, He *bare the sin of many*, i. e. as many as shall repent and believe the gospel.

<sup>o</sup> Κληρούμενοι πολλάς. <sup>q</sup> *John* vi. 44.

“many

“many as thou hast given him.”—The Father is here said to give the Son power over all flesh : this power the Son hath exercised and shown, by putting all men; through the merit of his death and passion, into a salvable state : But eternal life he bestows on none but those whom his father draws, and gives unto him, that is to say, whom divine providence hath placed within the sound of the gospel, and whose probity of heart hath disposed them to embrace it.—All which plainly confirms what we have above observed concerning the two kinds, or rather degrees, of justification, which is obtained to us through Christ : the one taking in all mankind, the other the *many*. And, O ! let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, strive to be one of the *many*, and not depend, as careless Christians seem to do, on the false hope that all shall be saved, because all have been redeemed : Nor let the weak believer despair of mercy, through false notions of any secret decrees, seeing *all* are intitled to justification of life, who accept it on the terms proposed ; and none excluded from salvation, or excepted in the general pardon, but such only as wilfully reject and refuse it.—*And he shall divide the spoil with the strong.*] The expression alludes to the custom of conquerors, who divide the spoils of their victory with their officers and soldiers : So Christ after he had conquered the powers of darkness by his cross, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—But if we render the words according to the Septuagint, and the Chaldee paraphraſt, *He shall divide the spoils OF the strong* ; then the ſense will be, that Christ shall turn Satan out of that kingdom which he had usurped over mankind, and recover his own just right to it ; according to that ſaying of his, in *John* xii. 31. “Now shall the prince of “this world be cast out.” And this interpretation of the prophet’s words, our ſaviour himself seems to

\* *John xvii. 2.*

allude

allude to, when, speaking of his conquest over Satan, he faith, " When a stronger than he shall come upon " him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all " his armour, wherein he trusted, and D I V I D E T H " his s P O I L S : "

\* *Luke xi. 22.*

*The*

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*The Third Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH Chap. lv.

P R E F A C E.

*I*T being the great end and design of the manifestation of the Son of God, to destroy all the works of the devil, not only (as before observed) that idolatrous worship he had set up in the world, but all kinds of sin and wickedness, which he tempts mankind to commit; and as the church, in her foregoing lessons for this season, hath professedly taught, and asserted, the essential Divinity of Christ; and directed our adorations to Him, as the true and proper object of Divine worship; she now proceeds more expressly to invite all men to the practice of those good works, which Christ came to establish, and hath prepared for us to walk in, in opposition to, and instead of, the works of darkness.

And, that no man may think himself excluded, either by the difficulty of acquiring that righteousness, or perfection of virtue, which the gospel requires; or be discouraged by any conscious unworthiness of receiving the benefits, and glorious privileges, which it proposes to us, the present lessons do more especially exhibit to us the general and unlimited freedom of Divine Grace; that, although the end and design of Christianity, which is a perfect,

*perfect, holy, and unspotted life, may seem at first too high for human frailty to attain to; yet, the means for attaining that end, and such a state of perfection, are most practicable and easy; that they are as free, and common to all, as water; as cheap as food that may be had without money, and without price.*

## Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. iv.

i. *H*o, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that bath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.

THE means of grace are often represented in Scripture, under the emblems of streams and springs of water; and grace itself is described by the metaphor of meat and drink; it being of the same use to the soul, as meat and food are to the body. As the one cleanses and refreshes, the other strengthens and feeds, the body; so these spiritual waters purify and refresh the soul: They are also as free as the natural, and may be had *without money, and without price*.—All may freely drink of these springs, that have but a thirst to desire them: All are welcome to this food, who please to accept of the invitation: For so the Great Ruler of this divine feast, the Holy Jesus, explains and confirms this his messenger's invitation, when he came in person to prepare the heavenly banquet; “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”—And as here the prophet cries, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come, &c.* so that beloved apostle tells us, in Rev. xxii. 17. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is

\* Matthew v.

“ athirst,

"*at first*, come ; and whosoever will, let him take "the water of life freely."—Hearest thou this, O man, and wilt not thou embrace so gracious an offer ? Or despisest thou the riches of Divine Goodness, because so cheap, and easy to be had ? 'Tis true, nothing is more free, nothing more cheap ; they are to be had for asking, to be purchased *without money, and without price* ; and therefore the world slighteth these blessings, even because they are common and cheap. But faith makes a very different estimate. Faith assures us, that infinite is the value of this *water* of life ; inestimable the benefit of this *wine*, and this *milk*.—And happy for us, that they are so cheap !—Were they to be bought, what have we to give ? What money can reach the price ? The world itself, with all its wealth, is no way equal to the purchase : He only that is "*rich unto all that call upon him*," hath paid down the *price* for them ; yea, paid it down for us : His they are, and he hath made them ours, by donation and free gift.—And he himself hath assured us, that these living *waters* are, his Spirit, *John vii. 37, &c.* that this *wine* is his blood ; this *milk*, his sacred word.—Come we then with a willing mind, and acceptance shall make them ours.

O my God ! I ask not then for these *waters* to refresh me ; this *wine*, to comfort ; this *milk*, to feed my soul : They are ready to my hand ; they are offered to my lips : But this I ask, an appetite for them ; an hunger and thirst, to constrain me to accept them ; to take and eat, in remembrance of him, who died to obtain these mercies for me ; and to feed on him in my heart with thanksgiving.

Happiness is what all man-

2. *Wherfore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?*

kind seeks after ; yet, how few seek it, where it is to be found ! or use the right means for obtaining it ! To

*bearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

place the *summum bonum*, or chief good of man, in any thing but GOD, is an error less to be wondered at in *Gentiles*, who know not

God ; but for us, who have GOD himself to light and guide us ; who is Himself both the way and the end ; who so freely offers us the true bread ; and so kindly invites to the felicity we seek ; for us (I say) to be still *spending* all our pains and time in seeking after it in the empty and unsatisfying enjoyments of the world, the very pomps and vanities which we professedly renounced ; or to place it in any thing, exclusive of him, who is the only fountain of all happiness ; yea, happiness itself ; is the grossest stupidity, and a most wilful blindness.

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto me: bear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

In this verse we have the gospel in epitome ; even the whole process of grace and salvation.—First, Christ and his ministers preaching the glad tidings of peace ; and calling upon us to come unto him.—Secondly, Faith inclining the ear, and carrying us to him.—Thirdly,

The Holy Spirit, quickening the soul, which, in its natural state, is dead in trespasses and sin.—Fourthly, The baptismal covenant made with God in Christ ; who is here called, *the sure mercies of David* ; that is, the sure and unmoveable foundation, on which the *mercies* stipulated in that covenant are built, and secured to all true believers : And it is called an *everlasting covenant*, in comparison of the covenant of works, which was annulled by our fall ; whereas this of grace never shall.—The law (or first covenant) was done away ; but the gospel (or second covenant) is to subsist for ever ; and is therefore, in Rev. xiv. 6. called “ the everlasting gospel.” So that the covenant of our peace shall never be repealed.—How

should this encourage our hopes! The *mercies of David*, i. e. of all who are after God's own heart, as *David* was, are *sure mercies*: How should this inflame our love, and quicken our diligence!

4. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

5. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knewest not, and nations that know not thee, shall run unto thee, because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy one of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.*

*I have given him, &c.]—Who is here meant by *Him*? —Who is it that speaks, and faith, *I have given him*? yea, who is it that is spoken to, in the fifth verse, *Thou shalt call a nation, &c.*? —The common sense of expositors is, that it is God the Father speaking of, and to, the Son. —But is it not rather the *Logos*, the Word or Son of God, speaking of, and to, the *Messiah*? that is to say,*

the Divine Nature speaking to the human and assumed nature of Christ; to Christ, in his mediatorial capacity as Son of man.—That the person speaking, in the beginning of the chapter, is the *Messiah*, cannot be questioned; it being his province to promulge the gospel; and there does not appear in the context any change of the person speaking: So that, as he that faith in the gospel, “Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden<sup>4</sup>,” is the same that here faith *Incline your ear, and come unto me*’ it is as evident, that he who calls upon us to come to the waters, &c. is the very same, who afterwards faith, *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, &c.*—*I have given him for a witness to the people, &c.*; consequently, all that is spoken throughout the chapter, is spoken by the Son, as he is the LORD [Jehovah] in, and of, the same divine essence with the Father.—If this be so, and it be also acknowledged, that he, who is here spoken of in verse 3. and spoken to, verse 5. is the

<sup>c</sup> See on chap. xli. 8. and xliv. 21.

<sup>d</sup> Mat. xi. 28

Mediator,

Mediator, that was to come in the nature of man, it will both make the context much more coherent and plain, and be a key to many other parallel places in the *Psalms*, and the Prophets; and, consequently, confirm the grand and fundamental article of our Christian faith, which the church, at this season, labours to instruct us in; namely, that “our Lord Jesus Christ is both GOD and man.”—There will also remain no difficulty to understand, that the predicate or subject which the word, *Him*, verse 4. or *Thou*, verse 5. do belong, and refer to, is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; who is here, and by the apostle likewise (*Acts* xiii. 34.), called, *The sure mercies of David*; but not in a private sense, as those mercies were limited to the house and family of *David*; but in a far more general and universal sense, as extended to all that believe in Him, who is both the Son and Lord of *David*; so that he is our *sure mercies* (or as the Greek version renders it, our *sure holiness*)<sup>e</sup> in the same sense as He is our righteousness, our sanctification, our peace.

6. *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.*

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

8. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither*

Here Christ invites us all to a sincere repentance, and to accept of mercy, while it is to be obtained.—“Now ‘is the accepted time, now ‘is the day of salvation.”—Grace is freely offered to all: All are called upon to come, verse 1, &c.—This, though an act of infinite goodness; yet, the words, *while he may be found*, and, *while he is near*, carry in them no small terror; as plainly intimating to us, that there is a time,

<sup>e</sup> Τὰ ἴσια τὰ μῆτα.

*are your ways my ways, / faith the LORD.*

9. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

when he shall not be found —“ When they shall call upon him, but he will not answer; when they shall seek him early, but they shall not find him.”—The reason why they miss him, is, because they seek him not in his own way. The ways of the Lord, and the ways of wicked men, are quite contrary to each other.—*My ways are not your ways.*—To find him, therefore, the wicked must forsake his own way, and return; that is, must turn quite back again all the way by which he had gone astray, before he can come into the paths where God is to be found.—*My thoughts are not your thoughts:* Therefore the unrighteous man must give a new and quite different, turn to all his thoughts, notions, and principles; which worldly wisdom, interest, or education, may have rendered familiar and habitual to him.—He that repents, therefore, must not only change his whole scheme of actions, but his way of thinking too; yea, his thoughts, as the first principles of his actions, must be first reformed: And it is an holy humility alone, that can make this total change. This truly cardinal virtue considers the infinite superiority of God’s ways and wisdom above ours; that, *as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.* Therefore it discards every opinion and sentiment that is contrary to his word; because it cannot but be false, and disclaims every action which is contrary to his commands; because it cannot but be evil.

10. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth*

These words are full of comfort to the true penitent.—Man can do nothing of himself to break the chain of

*not thither, but watereth  
the earth, and makeith it  
bring forth and bud, that  
it may give seed to the sower,  
and bread to the eeter.*

11. *So shall my Word be  
that goeth forth out of my  
mouth: it shall not return  
unto me void; for it shall  
accomplish that which I  
please, and it shall prosper  
in the thing whereto I sent  
it.*

through the genial warmth of the sun, *bring forth, and bud*, and put on a new face of plenty; to welcome the returning spring: So the soul, whose life and affections have, as it were, been frozen up by sin, quite dead to God, and to all those holy operations which he requires, can hope for no revival from such a benumbed condition, such a death, but by the word, and enlivening virtue, of her Saviour, who often sheds down upon her the showers of his grace, to impregnate her barrenness, and the heat of his Holy Spirit to melt her sins away, as the sun in fair and warm weathers.— And what heart can be so frozen, that this will not dissolve? or so barren, as not to grow fertile with such showers of Divine Love, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance?

12. *For ye shall go out  
with joy, and be led forth  
with peace: the mountains  
and the hills shall break forth  
before you into singing, and  
all the trees of the field shall  
clap their bands.*

his sins; all his sufficiency is of God: The Word of our God is mighty to save; he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.—As in the depth of winter all nature seems dead, and the earth quite barren and unactive, thro' excess of cold; yet, after it hath been often drenched with rains and snows, which, in that season, descend from heaven, it will revive again

If, as our Lord tells us, there is joy among the angels in heaven, for one sinner that repenteth; how much more shouall the blessed effects of the gospel, whereby such infinite numbers have been converted and saved,

13. *In instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.*

cause a joy upon earth! Those holy and benign spirits rejoice in the glory of God, and the good of man: And can man, who alone receives the gift and immediate benefit of this great salvation, remain unaffected, and without the warmest

sentiments of gratitude and joy?—The fruits of righteousness are joy and peace; it brings down heaven upon earth; it restores the golden age, and turns the mountains and hills into a paradise. The *thorn* and the *briar*, which the curse produced, shall give place to the verdant *myrtle*, and the stately *fir*. Those men who were pernicious as *briars*, untractable as *thorns*, shall, through the miraculous power of evangelical grace, emulate the beauty and straightness of the *fir-tree* by the eminency of their virtue, and uprightness of their lives: They shall imitate, and outvie, the fragrance and verdure of the *myrtle*, by the sweet odour of an holy and amiable example.

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*The Third Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. lvi.

P R E F A C E.

**I**N this lesson the prophet exhorteth to sanctification and true holiness: The steps and degrees whereby the same is to be obtained are also pointed out.— And to shew the great and inestimable benefit of Christ's Epiphany, or manifestation to the world, the gifts and privileges of the gospel are declared to be free to all without distinction of any legal incapacities, or respect of persons, either with regard to country, or any corporal imperfections: That none are excluded from grace, but for moral and wilful defects: That such indeed exclude themselves, either by following blind guides, or their own corrupt lusts and passions; and giving themselves up to a slothful, sensual, luxurious life.

*The Third Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. lvi.

1. **T**HUS saith the **LORD**; *Keep ye* **T**HE steps by which we may arrive to salvation, are, 1st, Moral honesty,  
B b 4

*for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.*

holiness, and a virtuous disposition of mind:—*Keep judgment, and do justice.*—This is

that good ground our Lord

speaks of<sup>a</sup>, in which alone the seed of the word will grow, and come to perfection. This “prepares the way of the Lord, and maketh his paths straight<sup>b</sup>.”—“Without holiness (we are told) no man shall see the Lord<sup>c</sup>;” but without righteousness, and moral virtue, no man can attain to holiness.—In these two qualifications consists that Image of God which we lost by the fall, and is restored by the gospel: For “the new man is created after GOD in righteousness and true holiness<sup>d</sup>.”—These who are *Ishailites* indeed, and without guile, will readily come to Christ, and commerce his disciples: For these are they, “whom the Father is said to draw, and to give to Christ out of the world<sup>e</sup>;” who have learned of the Father<sup>f</sup>;” and are “ordained (*i.e.* disposed; so the word rather signifies) to eternal life<sup>g</sup>. These gladly receive the word, embrace the gospel, and come to Christ; and he will in nowise cast them out<sup>h</sup>.

The next step is (2dly), Faith. — *My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;* which in effect is the same with what the holy Baptist, and forerunner of Christ, said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—The Jew was to believe, that Christ would come: That he IS come in the flesh, and will come again with glory to judge the world, is the faith of a Christian.—The prediction of his first advent we have seen fulfilled in the gospel; the same gospel foretels his coming to judgment. The first event must confirm our faith in the second. But if, after the exact accomplishment of the prophetic ora-

<sup>a</sup> Mattb. xiii. 23.

<sup>b</sup> Mattb. iii. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>d</sup> Ephes. iv. 24. Col. iii. 9. <sup>e</sup> John vi. 44. Chap. xvii. 6. <sup>f</sup> Chap. iv. 45. <sup>g</sup> Tetrapl. Ad. xiii. 48. <sup>h</sup> John vi. 37.

cles concerning *Jesus Christ*, we have seen him indeed come to save and redeem, but do not receive him, our infidelity must appear to be rather want of ingenuity than want of faith; and how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

2. *Blessed is the man that doth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it: that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.*

The third step towards sanctification and eternal life, is justification, or the remission of sins. And this is not only stipulated to us in baptism, but actually conferred upon us at the same time, baptism being the visible form whereby justification

is conveyed to us, and the pledge to assure us thereof. Man, by the fall, incurred the sentence of condemnation, was doomed to death, and laid under a curse: But faith in Christ acquits us from that sentence, and that curse<sup>k</sup>; and places us in a state of blessedness, as the apostle rightly styles it<sup>l</sup>, harmonizing with our prophet, *BLESSED is the man that doth this*; that is, who not only keeps his own righteousness, to wit, the moral virtues of common honesty and integrity, but by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, as perfective of his own; and the only sure basis of that justification, which intitles us to salvation.—Both a prophet<sup>m</sup> and an apostle<sup>n</sup> tell us, That “the just shall live by faith;” that is, that even the virtuous and moral man shall *live*—[the spiritual life here, and the life of glory hereafter] not by his own justice, or righteousness, but *by faith*.—Moral justice will indeed qualify and dispose him for justification by Christ, but not make him just before God, without the merit and imputation of Christ’s righteousness; which therefore he must *lay hold of* by faith in the covenant of grace, if he would be *blessed*, and

<sup>k</sup> See Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>l</sup> Chap. iv. 9.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. ii. 4.

<sup>n</sup> Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11.

obtain

obtain the remission of sin.—The fourth step is a sincere and uniform obedience, or a life wholly regulated by the laws and commands of God. One of which laws (to wit, the Fourth Commandment concerning the keeping the *Sabbath*) was particularly ordained to be a sign or token of God's covenant with his people<sup>o</sup>, and so became the distinguishing characteristic of a worshipper of the true God, who made heaven and earth, and instituted the *Sabbath*, as a memorial of that creation. — This obedience to the laws of God includes in it that lively, operative, and efficacious faith, which succeeds baptism, and is the genuine result and effect of the spiritual life, which is then received, and animates it; even that faith which worketh by love; which bringeth forth good fruits, and *keepeth the hand from doing any evil.*

3. *Neither let the son of the stranger, that bath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.*

4. *For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant:*

5. *Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I*

*5thly,* Another necessary step in our way towards heaven, is a due use of the means of grace; the chief of which are here hinted to us. 1st, Baptism, whereby we enter into covenant with God, and are *joined unto the Lord;* for then are we made members of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; children of God the Father, and receive a *name better than that of sons and daughters*—to the greatest prince upon earth; even an *everlasting name, which shall not be cut off*, being registered in the Lamb's book of life (*Rev. xxi. 27.*), and an inheritance entailed

<sup>o</sup> See *Exod. xxxi. 13.* *Ezek. xx. 12.*

upon

*will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*

6 *Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the L O R D , to serve him, and to love the Name of the L O R D , to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant:*

7. *Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted from mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*

upon us in the kingdom of heaven;—for so, ver. 7. *I will bring them to my holy mountain.* 2dly, *Keeping the Sabbaths*, i. e. observing all those holy days and seasons, which God and his church have set apart for his honour and service.—*Keeping the Sabbath*, in verse 2. is instanced as an act of obedience to a prescript law; but here, keeping my *Sabbaths* (in the plural number) is mentioned as one of the principal means of grace.—3dly, Duly frequenting the public worship at his church, which is his *house of prayer for all people*; to which therefore all people, especially his own people, should resort.—4thly, Attending his *altar*: Hereby the other sacrament is meant, wherein the memorial supper of Christ is celebrated, and in virtue of which all our *burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, all our prayers, all our acts of praise and obedience, are accepted. 5thly, Hearing the word of God, and what the *Lord saith unto us*—by his Ministers, by his Scriptures, by his Spirit. — They that do these things, that shew their faith by their works, and prove that they do indeed *take hold of his covenant*, by their performance of its conditions, shall assuredly be brought to his *holy mountain*.—In the mean time he will make them *joyful in his house of prayer*, that is, in his Church upon earth. And I may appeal to every sincere frequenter of it, if there be any joy comparable to the joy that he finds within those sacred walls. Can he forbear saying with the devout Psalmist, “ Lord, I have

“ loved

“ loved the habitation of thy house, and the place  
 “ where thine honour dwelleth ?”—Will he not say,  
 “ I was glad when they said unto me, We will go  
 “ into the house of the Lord ?”—No music sweeter  
 than the sound of those bells that invite to that  
 heavenly repast !

*8. The Lord GOD, which gathered the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him*

The gathering together the *outcasts* of *Israel* into one body, after their several dispersions to *Babylon*, &c. and bringing them to *Jerusalem* again, was an emblem and type of Christ’s gathering his Church from among the bulk of mankind, or, as he himself expresses it, from “ out of the world .”—The number of profelytes to the *Jewish* church in the times of the second temple, was also very considerable, and an eminent type likewise of the calling of the *Gentiles*; who are plainly meant by those *others*, whom he here promises to gather *besides* those first converts to the *Jewish* church. They were a kind of earnest of what should be done by the gospel, and especially of (what we hope and daily pray for) the conversion of the whole world; when, in the fulness of times (as the apostle speaks), “ He shall gather together in one all things in Christ.”—And let all who live within the sound of this call, and at this time celebrate the performance of this gracious promise in part to us *Gentiles*, not only say, Amen, but promote the full accomplishment of it by the united influence of their lives and conversations.

*9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour; yea, all ye beasts in the forest.*

This seems to have so little connexion with, or relation to what goes before, that some interpreters make it the beginning of another

¶ *Psalm xxvi.*    § *Psalm cxxii.*    \* *John xvii. 6.*    † *Ephes. i. 10.*

10. *His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.*

11. *Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough; and they are sheep-herds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.*

12. *Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*

chapter. But if, with our church, we let it stand as part of our present lesson, it may be considered as a strong contrast to the former part; and set, as it were, in opposition thereto, in order to impress on our minds a deeper sense of that goodness and mercy of God; which is displayed to us in the beginning of this chapter; and, on the other hand, of that justice and severity wherewith it concludes: Both which we have frequent need to think of; yea, often to place them in one point of view, as the best and most powerful argument to illustrate and set off each other in their strongest and most proper light.—This would teach us, that God is just, as well as merciful; that, as in judgment he remembers mercy, so in acts of mercy he forgets not judgment; this would keep both our hopes and our fears within their due bounds, that so we may neither presume too far on the one hand, nor be too much dejected on the other: While the dark shades of justice magnify the divine mercy, and the brightness of mercy qualifies the terrors of justice, the just medium between both is a sure defence against either extreme.

And now, having reconciled the seeming difference and contrariety between the two parts of our lesson, and rendered them consistent with each other; we are next to consider the sense, and then the use of this latter branch.—This, in part, is already done in the preface. And whereas the former part of our lesson

lesson sets forth the end and design, the blessings and privileges, of the gospel, and the unlimited freedom of divine grace, to all that willingly and effectually lay hold of the Christian covenant ; a question might naturally arise, What will become of those, who reject the gospel of Christ, or disobey it ? To this it immediately follows, as it were by way of answer : A commission is issued to the *beasts of the field*, yea, to all the *beasts in the forest*, to *devour*, and to *destroy*, all such.—Now the church is every-where in Scripture represented as an inclosure : sometimes as a vineyard, hedged and fenced about<sup>u</sup> ; sometimes as a strong city, with forts and gates<sup>w</sup> ; sometimes as a fold, with walls and doors<sup>x</sup> : And whoso enters and keeps therein, is safe, and in peace. But if any stray out of the sacred pale ; or neglect, when invited, to enter in ; they are exposed to the mercy of wild and ravenous beasts of prey. The lions, the bears, the wolves ; that is, the Devil, with all his infernal crew ; have permission from God to seize and *devour* all that reject or forsake this city of refuge.

Should another question be moved, as it reasonably may, how it comes to pass, that any should refuse to come into this blessed fold ; or much more, why any should choose to forsake it ? the following description of evil ministers is a sad, but often too true an answer to the question. Their office is to watch, to guard, to feed, to guide their flock : But, if, when they should act the part of *watchmen* ; they are *blind*, and neither see their own duty, nor their people's danger ; if, when they should shew fidelity, to warn, to exhort, to rebuke with all authority, as occasion may require, they then are *dumb*, and lie down, and *love to slumber* ; if, instead of feeding the flock, they only care to feed themselves ; yea, are *greedy* to devour, rather than diligent to preserve ; if,

<sup>u</sup> *Isaiah v. 2.*

<sup>w</sup> *If. xxv. 1.*

<sup>x</sup> *John x.*

when

when satiated themselves, they *lie down to sleep*, while others destroy ; if they mind no interest but their own, *look only to their own ways*, have no zeal for souls ; but *every one for his gain, from his quarter* ; what wonder is it, that so many should refuse to enter into the fold, where the shepherds are as rapacious as the *beasts of the field*? What wonder so many of the flock should desert the fold, where their pastors are either so cruel and injurious, or so careless and negligent of their charge ? O that all clergymen would seriously lay to heart this description of bad ministers, in order to avoid, or amend, the fatal consequences of such abuse of their holy function ?

But, O my soul ! tread softly on this holy ground. — It is true; the clergy of our church are generally acknowledged to be as virtuous and moral, as any other national clergy whatever : but if there be one that walketh disorderly, even that is too many. — Many excellent ministers of our church do I know, and have known ; men not only of learning, but of true piety. Howbeit, seeing the Scripture speaks of spots even in God's children ; the only spot I have to mention in our fathers is, a kind of mistaken charity towards the adversaries of our church, which has produced a fatal latitude both in discipline and principles. We cannot but see the enemies of every kind are indefatigable in sowing their tares. O that there were an equal spirit of vigilance, to prevent the spreading of so great a mischief ! Where the fault lies, is known to God alone : It is not for us to charge any, but to pray for all ; especially that God may be pleased to remove those impediments, which worldly causes throw in the way of his ministers, who are willing but not able, to remove all scandals in his church. Our blessed Lord who foresaw these offences, and the difficulty that would attend the most pious attempts to reform them, is pleased to declare, that he reserves this great event

to himself, at the day of harvest, or consummation of all things.—This may be an ease and comfort to well-disposed minds, who find their power and skill not equal to such a work.—See the church of *England's* wish in her *Commination-office*, and the book on that subject.

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*The Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY.*Proper Lesson for 

M. P. ISAIAH,	Chap. lvii.
E. P. ——————	Chap. lviii.

## P R E F A C E to both Lessons.

**T**HE prophet having, in both the lessons for last Sunday, published the gracious call and earnest invitation of Christ, to accept the terms, and embrace the offers, of salvation; and concluded (chap. lvi.) with a sharp reprehension of those hardened sinners, who then slighted the proffered mercies of God; and consequently of all them who should thereafter reject the heavenly call, and glad tidings of salvation, thro' impenitence or unbelief; having also in that chapter, under the character of the wicked watchmen of his time, ascribed the general cause of infidelity and impenitence to the supineness and ignorance, the luxury and avarice, drunkenness and intemperance, of the teachers; he proceeds, in the lviith chapter (which is a plain continuation of the same reproof) to tax the then reigning sins of the people, as the necessary consequence of such bad example, and neglect of instruction: So that not only a general contempt, yea, persecution, of good men ensued (as is noted in the beginning of this lesson), but a total defection from God to the grossest idolatries, and most monstrous superstitions of the heathen nations.

In the lviith chapter, the spots in God's own children, and the particular vices of his servants professing the true religion, are pointed out, and reproved, as well as

*the more flagrant impieties of idolatry, and ethnic superstitions; all which the coming of Christ was designed of God to reform, and finally abolish; according to that of the apostle, "For this end the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and world'y lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from ALL iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."* Titus ii. 11, &c.

### Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

#### ISAIAH, Chap. lvii.

i. **T**HE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

THE best bulwark and security any nation can have against public calamities, is the virtue and prayers of good men; ten such would have preserved Sodom. Yea, so great an interest with God hath one righteous man, as to avert, or at least to withhold during his own life, the impending stroke of divine justice from a guilty people: He stands in the gap for them, and often reprieves them from destruction. The death of such a person cannot but be a public loss; and yet the more corrupt any people is, and so the more obnoxious to God's anger, the less is their concern for such a loss, because so much the less is the sense of their danger.—The good man's departure is indeed his own safety and repose; but is often the signal and commission for vengeance upon the workers of iniquity.—The angel could do nothing till Lot was gone out of Sodom.—And yet the wicked hate

hate and persecute these their guardians, and best of friends, altho', by cutting them off, they make way to their own destruction.—They justly forfeit the continuance of a support, the benefit of which their malice disdained to enjoy.

*2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*<sup>a</sup>

In the sight of the unwise, the persecuted righteous man may seem to perish; and his end is taken for misery; but he is in *peace*: And tho' he be prevented with death, yet his hopes are full of immortality, and his soul in the hand of God, “so that no torment shall touch him<sup>b</sup>.”—He that walketh before Him *in his uprightness* in life, shall find the grave a *bed of rest*. Yea, while the body sleeps in the grave in sure expectation of a glorious resurrection, the spirit becomes more vigorous and active than ever; nor shall it be suffered to see the corruption of death or sin; but still continue to *walk in its uprightness*; fixed for ever, and immoveable, without a possibility of danger from men, or of falling away from God; it shall enjoy an happier Paradise than that we lost: a Paradise, where there shall be

*No dung'rous fruit, no tempting Eve,  
No crafty serpent to deceive;  
But all like Gods indeed shall be:  
O let me die that life to see!*

<sup>a</sup> *Each one walking in his uprightness.*] This place is very obscure, and variously rendered by expositors. Our English version seeming to come the nearest to the original [Holek bechoco.] I have endeavoured to express that sense in the paraphrase, as it signifies the survival of the soul after the death of the body, and describes its state of greater perfection and happiness, in the beatific presence of God: This state of the soul's better life, and survival, is intimated by the word *walking*; the other word, which also signifies [*coram eo*, i. e. in his presence] may denote the said beatific vision. In this world we see only God's back parts; in the next only can we see his face and live.

<sup>b</sup> *Wisd. iii.*

3. But draw near hither,  
ye sons of the sorceress <sup>c</sup>, the  
seed of the adulterer, and  
the whore.

4. Against whom do ye  
sport yourselves? against  
whom make ye a wide mouth  
and draw out the tongue? are  
ye not children of trans-  
gression, a seed of falsehood?

5. Inflaming yourselves  
with idols under every green  
tree, slaying the children in  
the valleys <sup>b</sup> under the cliffs  
of the rocks?

6. Among the smooth  
stones <sup>c</sup> of the stream is thy

The literal sense of this passage is explained in the annotations annexed; but the spiritual meaning, which our church chiefly regarded in her choice of this lesson, seems to assign the reason, why Christ, when he manifested himself to the *Gentiles*, rejected the *Jews*. The whole charge, beginning at verse 9. of the preceding chapter, contains an indictment against that people, for their enormous immoralities, profane contempt of God, detestable idolatries; and, to crown their impieties, and

<sup>c</sup> Sons of the sorceress.] i. e. Not the genuine children of *Abraham*, as ye pretend and boast; but rather deserving the name of bastards, than sons of the true church. So our Lord calls the wicked *Jews*, an "adulterous generation, Matt. xvi. 4." "Children of the devil," John viii. 44. "A generation of vipers," Mat. iii. 7.—Men, in Scripture, are often called the children and sons of those, whose practices they imitate: And departing from God, breaking faith with him, and violating the holy covenant made between him and the soul, is spiritual adultery. Yea for a church to forsake God, who is her proper husband, and cleave unto idols, is not only adultery, but forcery; because she consorts with devils: And all who have not God for their father, and the true church for their mother (as St. Cyprian speaks), are no other than the children of the *sorceress*.

<sup>b</sup> Slaying the children in the valleys.] The valley of *Hinnom* was chiefly noted for this inhuman practice; hence *Gebennah* (the name of that valley) came afterwards to signify Hell. Our Lord so uses the word, Mat. xviii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Smooth stones.] i. e. The stones or pillars which they used to erect in valleys, or near streams, and anoint with oil. Hence a superstitious man came to be called, by way of proverb, πάττα λίθος ἀνταπός πρόσκυνων, a worshipper of every smooth stone. So Clem. Alex. Strom. 7.—These were the most ancient monuments of divine worship, and possibly might derive the original from Jacob's setting up the pillar at *Bethel*, and pouring oil thereon, Gen. xxviii. 18.

*portion: they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these?*

7. *Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.*

8. *Bebind the doors also, and the post, hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and are gone up: thou hast enlarged thy bed and made thee a covenant with them: thou lovest their bed, whereto thou sawest it.*

9. *And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.*

10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand<sup>f</sup>; therefore thou wast not grieved.*

11. *And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembred me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?*

fill up the measure of their sins, the rejection and murder of their Lord and Saviour; who, according to the current sense of the fathers, is the *righteous man* (or *just one*, as St. Peter calls him) who is said to *perish*, ver. 1. and *no man regarded*. So that this whole passage bears an exact parallel to, and carries the same sense and design with, that in the prophet *Ezekiel*, chap. xvi. and is in the nature of a bill of divorce from that church, for putting her away as an unfaithful and adulterous wife.

It is also not unlikely, but that the church of *England*, when she reformed from that of *Rome*, had an eye in the choice of this lesion, to the notorious errors, and gross idolatries, of popery, as equalling the abominations of the *Jews*, which are here so severely censured and condemned of God; and therefore, as a sufficient justification of her separation from, and rejection of, that corrupted church.

<sup>f</sup> *The life of thy hand;*] i. e. say some expositors, ways and means to support thyself for the present; to wit, worldly helps

12. *I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, for they shall not profit thee.*

13. *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them.—*

There is, for man a day of grace; according to that saying of our Lord; “Hadst thou known, in this thy

“day, the things that be-  
“long to thy peace :” And

there is a day of God.—When this day [of God] comes, and that of grace is past (for the Blessed Spirit will not always strive with man<sup>b</sup>), then mercy must give

and assistance: *Therefore thou wast not grieved;* that is, thou didst not repent of thy sins, nor feel any remorse for thy evil practices. But the Hebrew [*Hajjath jadék*] which some render *widum*, the living, and expound it the *rest* of thy hand; others, *cætum*, *cauteriam*, the company of troop or thy hand, meaning thereby their *Affyrian* allies.—But, omitting what others say, may we not, most properly, in this place, understand it of the animal or sensitive life, which in the order of lives bestowed on man (*viz.* the *vegetable*, *animal*, *rational*, and *spiritual*), holds the second place, and exists in the body only, being the mere life of sense, which therefore the New Testament calls the *flesh*, and living after the flesh?—Now this exactly characterizes the case of the *Jews* here spoken to; and is indeed the true state of all wicked men: These, having lost the Spirit of God, which constitutes the divine and spiritual life, which was received by grace, do not stay long there, but by degrees lose also the life of reason, which is the honour and privilege of man, and sink down into the inferior life of mere sense, which they have in common with animals and brutes.—In this kind of *life* they place their strength; and their happiness; their *hand* or whole conduct is governed only by this carnal principle: It is by their shapes only, that they are distinguished from the beasts that perish.—They lose all sense and reflection of the morality or immorality of their actions, because they have forsaken the use of right reason, and therefore are *not grieved*, but rather glory in their sins. And whilst they find this *life of their hand*, this false peace, in a quiet enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, they never think of repentance. For this reason it is, that God so often takes from us these incentives of lust, this *life of our hand*, on purpose to bring us to ourselves, that is, to our reason; that so, by reflecting on our misery, as the prodigal son did when he came to himself, we may repent and return to him, whom we had grievously forsaken.

<sup>a</sup> Luke xix. 42.

<sup>b</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

place to justice. Patience abused will turn to rage : Even mercy itself will then “ laugh at the calamity of “ the wicked, and mock when their fear cometh ; “ when their fear cometh as desolation, and their de-“ struction cometh as a whirlwind<sup>1</sup>; when distress and anguish come upon them ;” then in a bitter, but just return of mockery, will God send them for help to their *companions* ;—those vain pleasures and friendships of the world, those honours and riches, those lusts and passions, the very declared enemies of God, which, in open violation of their holy covenant, they had preferred before him, and made their darling and most intimate associates.—These the sinner in distress is sent to for deliverance ; *Let thy companies deliver thee*.—But alas ! the wind of divine justice shall carry them all away. Not one of all those false friends shall yield the least comfort or support ; they shall be scattered away as chaff before the wind : *Vanity shall take them*.—He that, contrary to his solemn vow, adheres to the pomps of this world, and builds his happiness thereon, will at last, by sad experience, find that they are indeed *vanities*, lying vanities, that will deceive all his hopes. Nay, tho' they cannot save or profit, yet so noxious and deadly are the effects of these *vanities*, that they will certainly destroy. Vanity itself, tho' a mere nothing, proves always a real and inextricable snare to take all *them*, who put their trust therein.

—*But he that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain :*

14. *And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the flum-*

To shew the great benignity and goodness of God, it is usual with the prophets to pass from threatenings and denunciations of judgments, to promises of grace and mercy.—The promise here made, was fulfilled in its first and literal

<sup>1</sup> *Prov. i. 26, 27.*

*bling-block out of the way of my people.*

15. *For thus saith the High and Lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

accomplishment, to the Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity. But the spiritual, and more important sense is the free grace of God, offering pardon and salvation to all that repent, and believe in Christ — Sin is a severer bondage than that of *Egypt*, a more grievous captivity than that of *Babylon*; because it enslaves the soul by a double bondage, that of corrupted nature (whereof *Egypt* was the noted type); and that of inveterate habits, and a wilful course of sin, which the captivity of *Babylon* does mystically represent. Both these states are capitals of Satan's kingdom; and all who return not from thence, must inevitably perish. But to return, and break this double chain, is for us impossible: Christ alone can set the captives free; and here he points us out the way, by which we may escape. Our return must begin by repentance; be directed by faith; and perfected by an humble and sincere obedience. Repentance, like the pioneer, *casts up and prepares the way*; and Christ being both our light, and our guide, the eye that sees this light, and this guide, is faith. But humility is the holy charm which brings down the *High and Lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity*, to dwell amongst, and to conduct us thro' our pilgrimage of life to the land of *Canaan*, the lot of our inheritance; to the *Mount of holiness*\* here; of joy and happiness hereafter.—The corruption of nature, and perverse course of habits of sin, are the *stumbling-blocks* in our way: If these be *taken up*, and removed, by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall possess the land, and inherit his holy mountain; that is,

\* So the Hebrew.

be true members of his church upon earth, and receive the inheritance in his kingdom of heaven, which was promised and entailed upon us in our baptism.

*16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.*

*17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I bid me, and was worth, and he went on frowardly<sup>1</sup> in the way of his heart.*

*18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.*

*I will not contend for ever, &c.]* Observe here the difference between the dispensation to the old world, which was the law of nature; and the dispensation to the new world, which is the law of grace.—God said before the flood, “My “Spirit shall not always strive “with man;” and then resolved to destroy him from off the earth.—Here the same God declares indeed the same thing, That he *will not contend for ever*; but then immediately subjoins a word of mercy, *neither will I be always wroth,*

&c. and then promises to *heal* the froward sinner.—Divine justice had tried every method for reforming mankind: First, by reason, and the light of nature; this was the means used to the old world, and to the heathen afterwards: Next, by revelation, or his written word, to the *Jews*: containing a positive law, or the law of works superadded to the law of nature. But both these methods proving ineffectual to restore fallen man, at last God himself comes down, in the likeness of man, to *heal* the mortal distemper of sin! by the sacrifice of himself, to expiate the guilt of man; by his word, his example, and perfect righteousness, to shew him his duty, and teach him obedience; and by his Spirit, to subdue his affections, and conquer the dominion and power of sin: So that the means used under the

<sup>1</sup> *Heb.* turning away.

Christian œconomy (here spoken of by the prophet) is not to destroy man, but sin ; and by the sovereign efficacy of grace, to correct the will, and reduce the *frowardness* of the heart from the ways of vice into the way of virtue, and the paths of truth and peace.—And as we are here taught the method of our restoration, or redemption by Christ : so are we likewise taught the cause of our first falling away from God, and how we contracted the mortal disease of sin.—It was the *iniquity* or irregularity of desire (the abuse of which passion is the proper definition of *covetousness*, as it is here stiled by God) that first betrayed man into sin.—His coveting, or yielding to a criminal desire of, what God had forbidden, gave the first taint of corruption ; and is still the first motive, which tempts and leads away the will to evil.—No man chooseth evil as evil ; but, by the suggestion of Satan, or by our own lust, and depraved affections, it is falsely represented to the desire, as a good ; either as pleasing to the sense, or eligible to the understanding.—For this God is justly *wroth*, not only as it is a sin against order, and a misplacing our choice on a wrong object, contrary to right reason ; but much more as it is preferring the love of self to the love of God, and serving the creature, rather than the Creator.—In this obliquity of the desire consisted the formal nature of original sin, and is still the bitter root or cause of every actual transgression.—For this therefore God *smote Adam*, that he fell ; for this he still *smites* every sinner ; that is, he punisheth him with various afflictions, or else *bides* himself from him ; that is, withdraws the light of his grace for a time, and leaves him in a state of judicial blindness.—If the sinner still go on *frowardly in the way of his heart*, there is one remedy more which God is pleased to try ; and that is, the voice of mercy, and offer of free grace. And this is signified to us in these words, *I have seen his way, and will heal him* : Which is as much as to say, “ I have seen, that  
“ man

" man is absolutely incurable of himself:—No other remedy, but what is of infinite virtue, will restore him to health; nothing less than the death of my only Son will save him from death; nothing less than the infinite power of the holy spirit, can restore him to life."—This indeed is the sovereign, the only effectual, and therefore the last medicine which God hath made use of to *heal* the deadly plague of sin.—And we may likewise observe, that as in the creation of the world, and particularly of man, the whole Trinity co-operated to form him in the image of God, and make him a living soul; so the like gracious concurrence of the ever-blessed Trinity co-operates in the new creation of man (here promised) in order to restore him to that image and likeness of God, which he had lost by sin.—*I have seen his way,* saith the Father; and therefore in justice ought to punish: *I will heal him,* saith the Son; therefore shew him mercy: *I will lead him,* saith the Holy Ghost, and restore him comforts; therefore grant him everlasting life.—*I will lead him into all truth,* that he may receive comfort here; I will guide him by my grace thro' all the troubles and temptations of this world, to a better Paradise than he lost; and so restore comforts both to him, and to his mourners: Even comforts to the holy angels; who, as they mourned for his fall, shall rejoice much more for his restoration and salvation.—The rejoicing of the angels at the redemption and conversion of man is testified to by our Lord<sup>a</sup>: and was literally verified in their joyful carol at the nativity of Christ<sup>b</sup>.

19. *I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD, and I will heal him.*

As sin is a non-entity, and hath no proper being, but what man creates out of the chaos and confusion of his own disordered will; so peace in man is a perfect new crea-

<sup>a</sup> Luke xv. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. 14.

tion;

tion; there being nothing in him, from whence it can derive its existence. Therefore God himself, by the same omnipotent power by which he made all things out of nothing (or, as the apostle expresses it, "out of "the things that are not<sup>p</sup>"), is here said, to *create peace*. He produces it even out of its very contrary, enmity, as he did light out of darkness, and substance out of nothing. For as darkness was destroyed by the creation of light, so the enmity between God and man was destroyed by this new-created peace. So the apostle intimates in those words, "That Christ abolished this "enmity in his flesh, by making himself, of twain, "one new man, and so making peace<sup>q</sup>." Christ is also not only our peace-maker, but is expressly called *our PEACE*.

*Peace* is repeated, to imply (we may presume) the double peace, which man receives by his restoration to the spiritual life; namely, peace with God, and peace with himself: The first is obtain'd by the remission of his guilt; the other by the quiet of his conscience. Hence necessarily grows the *fruit of the lips*; that is to say, praise and thanksgiving to God, for his unspeakable gift.—And this mercy of peace and reconciliation is no less extensive, than it is gracious and free; it is granted not only *to them that are near, i. e. the Jews*, in immediate covenant with God, but to the *Gentiles* also, *who were far off*, and aliens to the commonwealth of *Israel*: For so the apostle applies this very passage to us *Gentiles*, assuring his *Ephesian* converts, that "Christ came and "preached peace to those who were *afar off*, and to "them that were *nigh*."<sup>r</sup>

20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

<sup>p</sup> Εἰς τῶν μὴ ὄντων.

\* Ver. 17.

*The wicked seek for rest* in their disorders, and therefore never find it; it is seeking the living among the dead, and placing their ha-

<sup>q</sup> Eph. ii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Verse 14.

21. There is *no peace*, even in a storm. In the *height of their enjoyments*, they are often forced to confess, that the pleasures they so eagerly pursue, fall infinitely short of their warmest expectations. They find nothing so false as their hopes ; nothing more real than their miseries —Yea, when habitual irregularities have so far extinguished the very light of reason, that they mistake imaginary happiness for the true ; yet even then, as God here assures us, *There is no peace*, no true felicity, *to the wicked*. What efforts foever they use to make themselves happy, there never can be any solid satisfaction, or sincere peace, to them who forsake the God of peace.

## The Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

I S A I A H, Chapter lviii.

Spots in God's children, or faults to which religious persons are subject; which, being either sins of omission, or some irregularity in the manner of performing their duties, they are here called upon to reform, and to aspire after greater perfection.

1. *Cry aloud, spare not,  
lift up thy voice like  
a trumpet, and shew my  
people their transgression,  
and the house of Jacob their  
sins.*

(for so the word *salvation* doth generally mean). In this lesson we are taught, that such health of the soul is not perfect in this life; no, not in the church. The very *people* of God, yea, the best of men, are liable to many infirmities.—So St. James confesses, and even includes himself,—“ In many things We “ offend all <sup>2</sup>. ”—For this reason the ministers of God are never to cease their admonitions to repentance; but, as here commanded, are to *cry aloud* and *spare not*; are to *lift up their voice as a trumpet*, and to

**I**N the foregoing chapter are described the methods whereby God hath been pleased to restore us from the power of sin and death, to a state of salvation, and health of the soul

<sup>2</sup> James iii. 2.

*shew*

shew us every the least *transgression*, whereby we offend.—However God might wink at these things before, the professed intent of the gospel is, to apply the fan, and lay the ax to the root of the tree; *i. e.* narrowly and impartially to sift the conscience, to extirpate the inmost corruptions of the heart, and spare no darling sin.—The express end for which Christ came into the world, was not only to destroy the works of the devil, but to fulfil the whole law of God; by his example to set us a pattern of perfect obedience; by his word to give us the rule, and to purify the heart by faith; and by his Spirit to quicken every duty, and improve every outward performance of religion into internal and spiritual acts of faith, working by love, ardent devotion, and true holiness. These are the genuine fruits of Christianity; this the true image of God; and where these are wanting, the outward acts and means of religion are of little benefit or use.

*2. Yet they seek me daily,  
and delight to know my ways  
as a nation that did righteous-  
eousness, and forsook not the  
ordinance of their God: they  
ask of me the ordinances of  
justice: they take delight in  
approaching to God.*

To seek God is to attend upon his *ordinances*, and to use the means of religion, such as fasting and prayer, reading and hearing his word, almsdeeds, and keeping the sabbath; as they are particularly enumerated in this our lesson. And what can be better, or more laudable, than such exercises as these?—Yet these, thro' some defect in the manner of performance, or wrong intention of the heart, lose their virtue; become dead works; yea, *transgressions*, and *sins*, if not wrought in God, and flowing from a principle of faith and love. How necessary then is it, to have the trumpet daily sounding in our ears, in order to keep us on our watch, to secure us against temptation, and preserve our very duties and exercises of religion from deg-

degenerating into formality and indifference, or the contrary extremes of superstition or enthusiasm :

3. *Wherfore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not ? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.*

4. *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness ; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.*

answer of God, it is plain they perverted the design of such acts of abstinence and mortification, and did them not for his sake, so much as for their own; that therefore, instead of producing the right effect of humility and self-denial, their fasting had increased their pride, and inflamed, rather than subdued, their irregular lusts and passions.—*In the day of your fast, ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.*

5. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the L O R D ?*

It appears by these arrogant expostulations with God, that these fasters had proposed to themselves some sinister end of their fastings, some views foreign to the right ends of religion, and the use of such instrumental means of grace. They seem to have had in reserve some private interest, which they hoped to gratify ; or else placed a merit in their fasts, as if God were beholden to them for the mere observance of them.—But, by the

It may from hence appear, that fasting itself is not unacceptable to God :—Nay, rather, it is a duty incumbent on us to perform ; for it is declared to be a thing which God hath chosen ; consequently is not to be neglected or despised, by those who profess to serve him.

♦ See Bishop Smalridge's Sermon on ver. 3. before the Queen, in 1710-11.

But it likewise appears, that a true religious fast does not consist in the mere outward expressions of sorrow, the *hanging down the head like a bulrush*, or *spreading sackcloth and ashes under us*; but must proceed from a motive of true piety, namely, first, from an humble obedience to the commands of God, and his church; and then, a sincere intention of subduing all our evil habits, and reducing our appetites to the rule of temperance.—It must likewise exert itself in external acts of mercy and compassion to the poor and needy, as well as in reforming the disorders of our own lives and conversation.

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

7. *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou bide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

Fasting, altho' it be an holy exercise, *chosen of God*, approved in Scripture, recommended of our Lord, and practised by saints and good men, both before and since the gospel; yet is of no intrinsic value or use, if alone: all its virtue flows from the graces, and good effects, which attend it. Yea, rather, as is insinuated in the 4th verse, mere abstinence is apt, by its increasing choler in the body, to dispose us to a fretful and

peevish temper;—to *smite with the fist*, and to speak in an high and passionate tone of voice. But this is a great imperfection, and contrary to that meekness of spirit, which ought to accompany our fast.—Here then we are taught of God himself, the **RIGHT USE OF LENT**, and of all other set days of abstinence; that it consists, first, in a sincere and effectual repentance, *loosing all the bands of wickedness*; i. e. all the corrupt affections, inveterate habits, darling lusts, which, like chains and fetters, have enslaved the heart to the service and drudgery of sin.—Secondly, in

shewing kindness to the poor in the several acts of mercy, such as releasing prisoners; for that is meant by *undoing the heavy burdens*, and *letting the oppressed go free*. So shall we break every yoke, that is, recover our own liberty, as well as restore it to our brother.—Feeding the hungry, by *dealing our bread to them*, and giving drink to the thirsty.—Hospitality, or receiving strangers, when we entertain the *poor that are cast out*, and *bring to our house those who have none*.—Cloathing the naked; *when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him* — Lastly, *not biding ourselves from our own flesh*. This takes in, not only such as may be of kin to us, but all mankind; for all, having the same original, and one common parent, are in truth *our own flesh*: And we may be said, not to hide ourselves from them, when we visit them in sickness, or relieve them in want; yea, when in death we bestow a grave: so that this includes in it both those acts of corporal mercy, the visiting the sick, and burial of the dead.—The expression of *our own flesh* intimates also to us the natural sympathy and tenderness, which we ought to have towards all, however differenced by any particular circumstances, even because we are all of the same common nature, and the very same flesh and blood.—In a word, as an universal charity must be an inseparable attendant on our fasts; so must a tender and affectionate fellow-feeling of our neighbour's distresses accompany and enliven every act of mercy.

8. *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy rigleousness shall go before thee, the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.*

9. *Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall an-*

But, altho' fasting, without the foregoing virtues, will not avail; it is no less plain, that without fasting the higher acts of religion lose their efficacy and force.—'Tis evident our Saviour ascribes a greater power to prayer itself, when joined with fasting, than when single and

*swer ; thou shalt cry, and be shall say, Here I am : if thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity :*

10. *And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day.*

11. *And the L O R D shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

12. *And they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places : thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.*

soul, and enlighten it with the knowledge of heavenly truths. — Secondly, Of spiritual health and strength : the soul shall get the better of all her disorders, and obtain a speedy recovery from sin ;— *Thy health shall spring forth speedily.*—Thirdly, Exemplariness of life, and good reputation ;— *Thy righteousness shall go before thee ; i. e. thy virtues, and the fame of thy good deeds, shall be like harbingers to go be-*

and alone. Some kinds of evil spirits, he tells us, are not to be cast out without prayer AND fasting &c. And here, we see what glorious promises are made to such a fast as God approves ; and what the qualifications are, which he requires to render it acceptable. First, it must be chosen of God, that is, a Religious Fast ; a day appointed by authority, rather than of our own private choice.—Secondly, a day for a man to afflict his soul ; that is, designedly set apart for humiliation and repentance, without hypocrisy or vain-glory.—If our Fast be such an one, and duly observed, then may we expect the following benefits, and blessed effects, of our fasting. First, The gift of divine illumination ; *Thy light shall break forth as the morning, &c.* that is, the sense of the divine presence shall revive the

fore thee, to prepare the way to honour and esteem, as well as shine before men for their example, and the glory of God — Fourthly, the assurance of divine protection.—*The glory of the Lord*, which the pious man most chiefly pursues, *shall be his reward*.—As his virtues go before, and compose a numerous and magnificent procession before him, so the glory of God shall follow him in all his ways, and bring up the rear; — both to do him honour, and to protect.—O happy soul, who art thus attended! what royal triumph to compare with this!—Fifthly, The answer of prayer; — *Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer*.—One of the most sensible comforts in all religion is the answer of God to our prayers. It is, in fact, the demonstration of the Spirit (as the Apostle speaks), the full assurance of faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—By prayer we speak to God; by granting the prayer he speaks to us.—But a mistake herein is dangerous; and yet too common. Some fall into great trouble and disquiet of mind, because they have no sensible return or answer to their prayers: they perceive not either in their spirit, or by the outward event, that God hath regarded their prayer: for this they grow melancholy and discontented; yea, sink into despair, as if they were castaways, and devoted to destruction.—Others again are too forward to take answers, when none are given: Sometimes, interpreting common occurrences as providential directions in their particular case; sometimes they dream dreams, and take them for visions; too lightly conceiving the motions of their own spirit, yea, often the suggestions of Satan, to be impulses of the Holy Ghost (for it is not always easy to distinguish).—At other times, some passage in a sermon, or text in Scripture, especially, if it happen to touch their case, passes with them for an oracle; and they determine their conduct accordingly with as much confidence, as if a voice from heaven had directed them.

It is not to be denied, but that these are some of the ordinary ways, by which God is pleased to answer our prayers, and signify his will; but so darkened is the heart of man, and so deceitful withal, that it requires the strictest prudence and caution to guard against delusion. To assist us herein, our lesson furnishes us with the following directions, to which it behoves us all to give the most diligent heed. First, It describes very particularly the necessary conditions and qualifications of that prayer, to which an immediate answer from God is promised, and the success assured to us. It must be the prayer of faith<sup>a</sup>; yea, a prayer of much experience in the ways of God: it must not only be offered up by an humble and penitent heart, but strictly observant of all those instrumental duties of religion, and means of grace, which God and his church have appointed, particularly fasting and mortification.—It must likewise be attended with

<sup>a</sup> *The prayer of faith,*] ἡ ψήφη τῆς πίστεως, the prayer, which St James so calls, chap. v. 15. was to be used in the case of a sick person, calling for the elders of the church to pray over him, and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And “the *prayer of faith* (saith the apostle) shall save the sick, and the Lord shall “raise him up.” But this prayer was peculiar to those primitive times, being dictated by a certain assurance and revelation from God, that the sick person should recover by virtue of such prayer; and this assurance was that kind of faith, by which miracles were wrought in the first ages of Christianity; was therefore common in those days; but is now as rare as miracles themselves. For the same reason this kind of prayer is also called, ver. 16. “The ~~EFFECTUAL~~ fervent prayer of a righteous man,” δερπις εὐγένεια, an operative prayer; not failing to work the effect desired.—But the *prayer of faith* recommended by our lesson is of universal extent, and unlimited perpetuity in the church; being that faith, which is not barely a general belief, but a firm and united faith in Christ, as Son of God, and Saviour of the world, according to the plenitude and full proportion of the Christian faith. Such a divine effectual faith shall never fail of a full and effectual answer.—To such a faith the standing answer is, “Believe only, and thou shalt be “saved.” μόνον πίστευε, καὶ σωθήσο; and to such a faith — nothing is impossible, ταῦτα δύναται τῷ πίστοις, Mar. ix. 23. chapter xi. 24.

every good work, and thoroughly purged from all leaven of malice and wickedness, hypocrisy and pride.

— The *yoke* of unreasonable rigour; the *finger* of contempt; and words of *vanity*, and self-conceit; must be taken away *from the midst* of us, that is, from our heart. And except the petition be thus pure, thus perfect, thus qualified, it is not intitled to such an answer of God, as is promised in our lesson.—But if the matter of our request be some future and contingent event, to determine from any Scripture expressions, or secret impulses, or any things less than express revelation, that we are commanded of God to do this or that, is doubtless an act of rashness rather than faith; favours of presumption more than piety, and may prove a dangerous delusion.—If the action, touching which we seek direction, be in itself indifferent, it is the proper and more immediate office of our reason to judge and determine concerning the expediency or fitness of it: For God, having lighted up that candle within us, expects we should consult and use it, as far as it can light us.—To pray to God to assist our reason, we may, and ought; but to neglect its aid and advice, and wholly and folly to apply to God for direction in matters of mere reason, and prudential consideration, is in truth no better than tempting the Lord our God; and is so far from engaging his help, that it gives the enemy a very great advantage, to mislead us by imaginary calls, and delusive suggestions.—If the subject of our prayer be matter of plain duty, wherein we desire the divine direction, the Scriptures are open, and there we are to search for the answers; — both what the will of God is, and how we are to perform it. So that no Christian, having these oracles to consult, need ever be at a loss for an answer to his prayers, if so be the substance and manner of them be according to the revealed will of God.—As to matters unrevealed, as no answer is promised

mised of God, so we shall but deceive ourselves in expecting any.

13. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:*

14. *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

Another ordinance of religion is the observation of the *Sabbath*.—This a good man remembers, not only to observe duly as its course returns, but to keep it holy according to the commandment. He is not only punctual and strict in conforming to the outward duties of the day, and the orders of the church, but he sets a guard on the inward motions of his soul; calls off his thoughts and inclinations from the world; and for this whole day shuts up the avenues not only of sin, but of every worldly interest and pleasure.—However innocent or necessary they may be at

other times, he discards them all as unlawful and criminal on this blessed day. Whatever affair therefore of pleasure or profit he was in pursuit of, no sooner appears this day of God, but he stops his course in reverence of the holy solemnity; he *turns his foot* from *doing his own pleasure*, to attend the pleasure and will of heaven—And not only so, but he *calls it a delight*, and feels it so to be; he calls it *honourable*, and makes it so:—By adorning himself with good works, as well as his body with his better apparel, he strives to do honour to the day which his Lord hath made, and called by his own most holy Name.—Yea, he turns the tenour of his *words* and *conversation*, as well as his *ways*, and his *pleasures*, to suit with, and promote, the sanctity and solemnity of the day.—It is true, the Lord blessed the Seventh

Day, and hallowed it, in honour of his rest from the great work of Creation ; but now the same Lord hath sanctified the First day of the week, in honour of his finishing the far greater work of redemption . “ for “ He is the Lord of the Sabbath also .”—And if the Jew was obliged to pay so solemn a regard to the first institution, how much greater reverence ought we to shew to our Christian Sabbath, which brought from the dead our Lord Jesus !—Every day of a Christian’s life should indeed be one continued Sabbath. He should at all times rest from his own works, his own pleasures, and his own words, which are for the most part sinful and vain, and turn the whole current of his life and actions to the works of piety and grace. This is what the Sabbath of the new law obliges to, even to rest from every work of sin, which is servile and base, and consecrate every day of our lives to the service of him, who hath made us free.—“ No longer “ servants, but children; children of God, and heirs “ of heaven.”

*e Mar. ii. 28.*

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*The Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY.*

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Ch. lix.

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE church in her proper lessons for this Epiphany season, having hitherto set forth the sundry ways of Christ's manifesting himself to the world; together with the many great ends, which he came to accomplish, she seems by her choice of the two first lessons for this Day's service to obviate an objection which might be raised.—“If Christ hath indeed so manifested his glory, “why then so many unbelievers (may some say) not only in the world, but even among those who are called by his Name?—Why such numbers still, who have not yet heard his gospel, namely the heathen?—Why any, that deny his coming in the flesh, as the Jew doth? “Or his Godhead, as doth the Heretic? Or the efficacy and sufficiency of his grace, as the bad Christian doth?”

To these objections Christ answers by his prophet in our lesson; That this failure of success proceeds not from any defect of efficacy in the gospel, nor of power or grace in Him; or from the insufficiency of the means whereby he hath revealed himself, and his will, to mankind; but from the

*the perverseness and corruption of mens hearts, who “love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; “yea, hate the light, and will not come to the light, “lest their deeds should be reproved.”*

Our LORD, foreseeing, even among Christians, the like unhappy neglect of that great salvation, which he hath purchased for, and freely offers to, all mankind; and that the effects would prove so disproportionate to the means used; vindicates by his prophet the readiness and sufficiency of Divine mercy to save all; and assigns the wilful sins of men as the true cause why all are not saved, and why those gracious means do not fully attain their end: Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear, &c. This, then, and not any fatal irrespective decree on God's part, is the true and only cause of the final miscarriage of any man, and of that blindness of heart, and criminal ignorance of divine truths, which betray men into inexcusable errors here, and final perdition hereafter.—They wait perhaps for him, who is the true light; expecting, as many do, that he should come to and visit them: but it cannot be truly said, they seek him (as some have affected to use that phrase) because they seek him not aright.—They wait for him in their own way, where he never comes; and therefore they wait in vain. They seek him not in his way, the way of peace and truth; and therefore in a way where he cannot be found.—They walk on still in darkness, in a state of wilful error, and an impenitent life:—They wait for light, but, behold, obscurity: for brightness, but they walk in darkness.

\* Job. iii. 19, 20.

## The Fifth SUNDAY after EPIPHANY.

## Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. lix.

1. *B*ehold, the LORD's  
band is not shortened,  
that it cannot save: neither  
his ear heavy, that it cannot  
hear<sup>b</sup>.

2. *B*ut your iniquities  
have separated between you  
and your God, and your sins  
have hid his face from you,  
that he will not hear.

3. *F*or your hands are de-  
filed with blood, and your  
fingers with iniquity: your  
lips have spoken lies, your  
tongue hath muttered per-  
verteness.

**I**T is too much the nature of man to murmur and complain in time of trouble, and lay the blame on any thing but himself. This unhappy temper we derive from our first parents (See Gen. iii.); yea, we are too apt to fly out against Providence, and call even God's power and goodness in question, rather than accuse our selves, and confess our own faults or follies to be the cause of our miseries. From this impious charge against God (for indeed all discontent and

murmuring under affliction is, in effect, no other than blasphemy against the justice, the wisdom, or power, of God) he is here pleased to vindicate himself; and to assign the real cause both of our sufferings, and of his with-holding his mercy; to wit, that the only true reason of both, are our sins; that our calamities, and the continuance of them, are not owing to any want of power in Him to deliver us, nor of goodness to hear and grant our prayers; but that our iniquities make him a stranger to us, break the union between him and the soul, interrupt that sweet correspondence, which used to be between him and his

<sup>b</sup> See Archbishop Leighton on this text, Ser. xviii.

people,

people, and stop the gracious current of his blessings.—The way then to recover these blessings, and regain his favour, is to judge and condemn ourselves; to confess and forsake those sins, which have *separated between us and our God*. Then shall we soon find the *hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save* out of trouble; nor his *ear heavy, that it cannot hear*, when we cry.—Where note, by the *hand* and *ear* of the LORD, are signified his power and wisdom. And how we are to understand this, and of which person in the holy Trinity it is meant, the great apostle teaches us; namely, of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; for so he expressly stiles him, “*Christ, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*.”—He is properly the *hand* of God, because by Him all things were made, that are made<sup>a</sup>; by Him they are upheld<sup>b</sup>, and still consist<sup>c</sup>: thro’ Him all prayer is heard by, and all access had to, the Father.—This *hand* indeed may seem to have been *shortened*, when he became man; but altho’ he emptied himself of his glory, yet laid he not aside his power to help us, but saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Tho’ he made himself of no reputation on earth, and appeared in the form of a servant; yet he lost not his interest in heaven, nor ever ceased to offer up the prayers of his people, at the throne of grace.—He *shortened* also his glorious and incommunicable name *Jehovah* to *Jah* (which is therefore called the abbreviated name<sup>d</sup> of God); but divested not himself of the almighty efficacy of that Name, which is above every name. However therefore he might seem to humble and lessen Himself, yet with respect to us, and to our salvation, he remained the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;—Ever the King of heaven and earth; ever the LORD mighty to save.—So that every true believer not only sees,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. i. 24.<sup>b</sup> Job. i.<sup>c</sup> Heb. i. 3.<sup>d</sup> Col. i. 17.\* See Bishop *Andrews* on the creed.

and can say with the prophet, *Behold, the hand of the LORD is not shortened, that it cannot save*, &c. but also knows and feels, that “there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby we can be saved, but only the Name of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.”

4. *None call them for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.*

5. *They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spiders web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper.*

6. *Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the seed of violence is in their bands.*

7. *Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood, their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, wasting and destruction are in their paths.*

8. *The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgement in their goings: they have made them crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace.*

From this charge of epidemic corruption against the whole nation of the Jews, we may observe the gradation of sin; how it begins, how it spreads, how it is finished (as St. James speaks) and ends in a general dissolution of manners. — The same progress of sin may likewise be seen in private persons, as well as in public communities, where it is not restrained — The first step is a turning away or departing from God, which is expressed in the foregoing paragraph, ver. 2. where sin, like a cloud, is said to separate between God and the soul. This necessarily brings darkness, and intercepts the light of Divine grace and truth. — Hence, Secondly, proceeds a lukewarmness and indifference to religion and virtue, a remissness and neglect of duty, so that *none calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth.* Thirdly, To this succeeds a boldness in sin: the conscience grows

feared and hardened : instead of prayer, and depending on God's providence for the blessings of life, they depend wholly on carnal helps and comforts ; and place their confidence in worldly things, as wealth, &c. things that, in the end, shall not profit ;— *they trust in vanity*.—Fourthly, As this, in effect, is a renouncing the fear of God, and the direction of his word and Spirit, no wonder their conversation should become corrupt, their very notions and principles prove wrong and perverse, yea, mischievous and wicked ; so that it is not safe to converse with them.—They *speak lies*; they *conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity*.—Nor do they stop here ; but, Fifthly, They turn all their wit and parts to contrive and propagate evil : their designs are all calculated to deceive, or to destroy. Sometimes they brood, as it were, on their plots of villainy, like the *cockatrice* on its eggs, to bring them to perfection, and hatch the deadly poison into open acts of mischief : Sometimes, like the *spider*, they weave a fine and subtil *web*, to catch the unwary, and then devour.—For so, Sixthly, they proceed to open acts of violence ; and if they cannot deceive by their *eggs*, and their *web*, i. e. to poison or ensnare, they will stick at no means to destroy. So that *their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands*; *their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood*.—Then follows the Seventh and last degree, which completes the character of a total corruption, and finishes the image of Satan ; to wit, when the whole man, or a whole people, is given up to the commission of all manner of crimes with greediness.—When men have stifled every check of conscience, and are come to a reprobate sense, then all *their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity* ; *wasting and destruction are in their paths* ; *the way of peace they know not*, and *there is no judgment in their goings* : they *have made them crooked paths*.—Well therefore is it added, for a warning to us all, *Whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace*.

This

9. *Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us; we wait for light, but, behold, obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.*

10. *We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night, we are in desolate places as dead men.*

11. *We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.*

12. *For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them:*

13. *In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.*

14. *And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

15. *Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey:*

This is the voice of those few penitent souls and mourners in Sion, who happened to live in such evil times, as are before described; who see and lament the general corruption.—When all the foundations are cast down, as the Psalmist speaks, and a torrent of sin and wickedness hath overspread the nation, both in church and state what can the righteous do? This question is here resolved by the prophet. First, Every serious observer of public corruptions is, in the first place, to humble his own soul before God; to enter into a strict examination, how far his own personal sins, how far the flaws or defects of his example, admonitions, endeavours, have contributed to the growth, and inflamed the account, of public provocations: — Then, with a deep compunction of heart, and penitential sorrow, to confess the common guilt as a common case; not palliating or excusing his own faults as less criminal than others, or thanking God with the conceited Pharisee, or self-sufficient Perfectionist, that he is not as wicked as other

*and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.*

other men are ; but rather taking part of the load, nay, the whole load, upon himself (as Christ did the sins

of the world) ; and professing himself the chief of sinners ; and that all, the very best of us all, have grievously offended, and worthily deserve to be punished.— Thirdly, Upon every occasion of public humiliation, the true penitent takes care to do honour to the divine law; justifies both the authority and equity of God's commandments, that they are holy, just, and true ; that the charge he brings against us (as contained in the foregoing part of our Lesson), cannot be falsified or denied ; that He is righteous in all he brings upon us ; but to us belong confusion of face, and the severest inflictions of divine justice, because we have rebelled against him.— These are the sentiments, and this the conduct, which become a sincere penitent, when he sets his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication to intercede for the sins of the nation, which he belongs to, and to deprecate impending judgments.— This was the manner used by holy *Daniel* (chapter ix.); this by the prophet in our present lesson.— This therefore must be the right spirit of penitence on such occasions : It is the most humble in itself, as well as most charitable towards others ; and therefore cannot but be the most acceptable to God, and most prevailing.

16. *And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.*

17. *For he put on righteousness as a breast-plate*

From this latter part of the chapter our church seems to have taken the occasion for making it one of her proper lessons on this day, and for this season.— The sins of men, and even of God's own people (as they are described in the beginning of the chapter, and then acknowled-

*and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for cloathing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.*

18. According to their deeds, accordingly be will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies, to the islands be will repay recompence,

man, no mere man, capable or qualified to redeem his brother, or to give to God a ransom for him; when he saw there was no intercessor<sup>i</sup>, not even among the angels, to mediate or undertake for mankind, then He himself took it upon him to execute the great design of saving man, and delivering him out of the hand of his enemies.

In order to this he equipped himself as a man of war<sup>k</sup>, to fight for and redeem his people. *He put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation on his head.* He took the whole armour of God, tempered and prepared in heaven<sup>l</sup>; and from this sacred artillery furnishes and equips every faithful soldier and servant, that comes to fight under his banner. On us also he puts the *breast-plate of righteousness*, — to fortify and defend the heart and affections from the fiery darts of sin; the *helmet of salvation* on our head, — to guard the understanding from the wiles and delusions of Satan; the *garment of vengeance*, that is, of humility, mortification, and self-denial, *for cloathing*; and *zeal as a cloke*, to keep warm every part of the inner-man, and fence it against the impressions of a cold indifference: — a *cloke* also, not

<sup>i</sup> See Milton, L. iii.    <sup>k</sup> Exod. xv. 3.    <sup>l</sup> This is the true moral of that fable in Homer of Achilles's armour made for him by the God Vulcan, Iliad. xviii.

of maliciousness, but of holy ardour, fervency of spirit, and love unfeigned.—Thus armed, thus accoutred, came the Redeemer to *Zion* to effect the salvation of mankind : thus armed, thus clothed, must we also be, to work out our own.

*19. So shall they fear the Name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun : when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*

—This fear is the beginning of wisdom ; this wisdom leadeth to repentance, repentance, to faith in Jesus ; and this faith, to that holy filial love and obedience, which casteth out all the tormenting doubts and misgivings of fear. So that *when*, at any time, *the enemy shall come in*, with his temptations or persecutions, *like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*, — to be our asylum and defence. — This standard is the cross of Christ, the ensign of salvation, and assurance of victory. — In Christ, and him crucified, we shall be more than conquerors.

*20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.*

*21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in*

The great end of God in all his dispensations, both of mercy and justice, is to consult his own glory, and the salvation of man.—He corrects, that he may have mercy : he strikes us with fear for ourselves, that we may grow wise in time, to see and escape our danger.

The first coming of the great Redeemer was to *Zion*: his second coming will be to the world in general.—He came first to his church, to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*, to his own people; but his own received him not. And why ? even because their deeds were evil.—None received him

*thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.*

him then, but those who turned from transgression in Jacob ; nor can any receive him now, but such as repent of their sins.—To such the kingdom of heaven is ever at hand, and the gates of it shall not be shut against

them.—Salvation then must commence in this life : Jesus will be a Saviour to none hereafter, but those whom he first saves from sin here.—He is a Redeemer to them only, who turn from their transgressions.—With Them, and them alone, he ratifies and confirms his covenant of grace.—To Them only the Father gives of the Spirit that is upon his Son, the Spirit of adoption and grace.—To Them, and their seed, whom they beget in the like image of God, he gives the words of peace and salvation ; words that shall not depart out of Christ's mouth, nor out of the mouth of his faithful people, from henceforth and for ever ; for they are the words of eternal life.

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## The Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. Ixiv.

1. *O*H that thou wouldest  
rent the heavens,  
that thou wouldest come down  
that the mountains might  
flow down at thy presence!

2. As when the melting  
fire burneth, the fire causeth  
the waters to boil: to make  
thy Name known to thine ad-  
versaries, that the nations  
may tremble at thy presence.

3. When thou didst ter-  
rible things, which we looked  
not for, thou camest down,  
the mountains flowed down  
at thy presence.

**T**HE foregoing chap-  
ter, from verse 15.  
to the end, concluding with  
a moving expostulation of  
the Jewish church with God,  
for his seeming indifference,  
and want of zeal, as if he  
had totally forsaken her:  
she continues her prayer  
throughout this our evening  
lesson; and, with an holy im-  
patience for the coming of  
her Redeemer, breaks out  
into this warm and passionate  
exclamation; *O* that thou  
wouldest rent the heavens, that  
thou wouldest come down, &c.

In the beginning of her prayer, she had besought him  
to look down<sup>a</sup>. Here she conjures him to rent the  
heavens, and come down; i.e. rent them, as men do their  
garments in conjunctures of sorrow, and extreme di-  
stress; and hasten down, to succour and redeem his

<sup>a</sup> Verse 15.

afflicted

afflicted people ; or as he rent the heavens, when he descended on Mount *Sinai*, and came to his church in the wilderness.

This ardent desire of the prophet, in the person, and on the behalf, of the *Jewish* church, may well make us Christians (especially of the present age) to blush for shame, that our love and zeal for Christ (now that he is indeed come in the flesh, to save and redeem us out of the hand of our enemies) should fall so far short of those inflamed desires, which the antient saints expressed for his incarnation, and first Epiphany in the flesh. This is St. *Bernard*'s pious reflection : And then he adds, "I am confounded, " and not able to refrain from tears, when I compare " the fervency of those holy men with the lukewarmness and indifference of our present times. If the very desire and expectation of that mystery made so deep an impression on their minds, how much more sensibly affected ought we to be, who see and enjoy the blessings, which they saw but in hope, and at a distance!"—Yea, how ought we to love, and long for, the second appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; and desire that more glorious Epiphany and Advent of our blessed Redeemer, when he shall put an end to all our sufferings, all our sorrows, all our sins !

4. *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

*Paul* also (which he calls a mystery that had been hidden from the princes of the world), cites this passage from our prophet. "As it is written," saith he, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into

St. *Paul*, in the second chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*, treating of God's extraordinary mercy in sending his Son into the world, and that wonderful manifestation of God in the flesh, by the gospel, not to the *Jews* only, but to the *Gentiles* also

“ the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”—The apostle, indeed, applies this passage (which yet he rather alludes to, than quotes) to the mystery of Christ’s incarnation, as if it were the primary and more immediate sense of the prophecy. But as the coming of Christ in the flesh is the ground and foundation of all God’s blessings and mercies to mankind, the words both in the prophet and the apostle, are generally understood of the future and ultimate happy effects of that mercy in the state of glory, and those joys and felicities of heaven, which are *prepared* and reserved for them that love God, and *wait for him*.

—But, to reconcile both, we may truly say, the prophet had an eye more immediately to the coming of Christ in the flesh, as an event then future; the apostle, regarding it as a prophecy fulfilled, a mystery unveiled, and come to pass, extends this prospect, and looks forward, to his coming in glory, and to those blessed effects of our Lord’s incarnation, which are more glorious, and still to come to pass; namely, the good things of heaven, and those unspeakable rewards, which are there laid up for them who shall be meet to be made partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.—And this may lead us to a more particular consideration of the great mercy which is the proper subject of our meditation for the present season.—If we take a review of this great mystery of godliness, the manifestation of Christ, from its first rise, and the progress it hath made *since the beginning of the world*, we cannot but observe, how this wonderful dispensation hath, by degrees, been opened and displayed to mankind; and how it hath gradually advanced, and is still advancing, from glory to glory, till, in the fulness of time, the whole series of our redemption shall be consummated in the eternal fruition of his beatic presence; when we shall see him as he is, and enjoy in him our sovereign felicity without separation, without abatement, without end!

His manifestation to our first parents was as a **SEED**, the seed of the woman :—To the patriarchs, as a **STAR**; “the Star out of *Jacob*<sup>b</sup>.<sup>c</sup>”

At his nativity, and converse upon earth, he appeared as the **DAY-SPRING** from on high, to visit us :—At his resurrection, as the **SUN** arising with healing in his wings (for he rose again, for our justification<sup>c</sup>); and still shining more and more, unto the perfect day; when he shall come again with power, and great glory, and shine forth as the sun in its full meridian brightness.—Then every eye shall see him; the faithful, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; the wicked, with confusion of face, and everlasting shame.

Every stage of his appearance was above the expectation or comprehension of man; events which eye had not seen, nor ear heard. But what hath already passed, and the gradual accessions of light and glory in the progress of this wonderful dispensation, must needs confirm our faith, that what is yet to come will most assuredly come, and be still more glorious, more inconceivably happy, if so be we are found in him,—wait for him, and love his appearing.

5. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.*

*Thou meetest.]* God may be said to *meet* us, when we are in his ways, and moving towards him. So he met *Abraham*; so he met *Jacob*; and so he met *Mary Magdalene* in the garden, when she was seeking him at the sepulchre.—Sometimes he

meets

<sup>b</sup> *Numb. xxiv. 17.*

<sup>c</sup> *Romans iv. 25.*

<sup>d</sup> *In those is continuance, and we shall be saved.]* This is a passage hard to understand, especially as it lies in our *English* translation. Some \* render it; *Had we continued in them [that is, in thy ways], we should have been saved, or safe;* which is a plain and easy sense, but rather too low, and beneath the usual sub-

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limity

\* *Junius and Tremellius.*

meets us in our sorrows, to comfort us ; yea, sometimes in our wanderings, to turn us back into the right way --But he never fails to meet him that *rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, and remembers him in his ways* ; that is, who walks with joy and pleasure in the ways and commands of God--The way of God, and

limity of *Isaiah's* style, and manner of expression. Others render it—*In those have we always been* [i. e. in those ways], *and we shall be saved*\*. But what does the word *those* refer to ? If to *[thy ways]* in the first part of the verse, this would be a contradiction to what is said in the sentence immediately foregoing [*Thou art wrath, for we have sinned*] ; that is, have forsaken thy ways : And how can any expect to be *saved*, if they have so sinned, as to forsake God's ways ; and especially, if they *continue* so to do ?—May we not understand, that it refers to *sins*, included in the verb *sinned* (such forms of expression being not unfrequent in Scripture) and then find a solution to this difficulty, in that distinction which St. John makes of sin, i Ep. v. 16 that “there is a sin unto death, and a sin not “unto death ;” that all sin, therefore is not mortal ?—Though every sin be a transgression of the law, and so far a forsaking of God, yet every sin is not unto death ; God does not so forsake us, on every commission of sin, or even some continuance therein, as immediately to cast away his people, and condemn without mercy : I say, *his people* ; as the prophet also speaks, ver. 9. [*We are thy people*] ; meaning those who are in covenant with him, and have been put into a state of salvation. There, although they sin, and God is wroth with them for every sin they commit ; yet, if that sin be not wilfully and impenitently continued in (which wilful impenitence the Scripture always distinguishes by the name of wickedness), that sin shall not be unto death, if so be we still keep within the covenant of grace, by faith in Christ. All have sinned, yea, continually sin, and come short of the righteousness of God : Not only bad men, but the very best of us all, fail in the strictness of duty. “In many things we offend all,” said St. James, including even himself in the number. And, “If any man say he ‘hath not sinned,’ saith St. John, “he deceiveth himself, and the ‘truth is not in him.” The difference therefore between good and bad men, or the character which distinguishes the one from the other, is not, in strictness, the good works we do, or the sins we commit ; but the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. Both kinds are sinners : but with this remarkable difference, as the apostle makes the distinction ; viz In the very best of men sin dwelleth †, but in the worst it reigneth ‡.—As this is a just reproof, and

\* Valz. *In ipsis sumus semper, & salvabimur.*

† Rom. vi. 12.

‡ Rom. vii. 20.

and the right way of man, is the very same ; but with this distinction ; God is in heaven, and we upon earth : His way then leadeth from heaven to us ; ours, if right, leadeth from earth to him : His way, by which he comes to us, are his attributes ; particularly, his communicable attributes of truth and holiness, mercy and goodness ; and, to say all in one word,

and seasonable caution, to our modern Perfectionists (who are no other than *Furitans* revived) ; so is it a gracious and comfortable intimation to the humble and contrite ones, whose feeble minds, or scrupulous consciences, are over-much terrified with a sense of their sins, that they should not be swallowed up with over much sorrow. —They may learn, for their comfort, from this passage in our lesson, and indeed from the whole tenor of the Gospel, and the very nature of the second covenant, that all sin is not inconsistent with a state of grace : For although it be true, that all wickedness is sin, yet all sin is not wickedness : Wickedness is the love of sin, and a delight therein ; and therefore not only incompatible with grace, or the favour of God, but withall virtue, or any degree of goodness in man. But the good and the pious man hates sin ; and yet nevertheless he finds it within him ; yea, therefore hates it because he feels it. Even St. Paul acknowledges, that “ what he would do, that he did not ; and what he would not do, that he did \*.” Sin is the depravity, which cleaves to the nature of all men since our fall ; so that there is none good (perfectly good), no not one. But this is an infirmity, rather than a crime ; a weakness to which we are continually subject, while we are in this mortal body ; and therefore the apostle distinguishes between the corruption of his nature, and the rectitude of his will, when he adds, “ Yet not I, but sin, which dwelleth in me.” Nevertheless sin, even the natural taint of original sin, is pardonable only in the elect ; that is, the covenanted servants of Christ, who have been made his members in baptism. Such persons, being *his people*, and such only, he loveth from their sins : He is a *Jesus*, to none else. Therefore the apostle adds ||, after he had given us that mournful description of the effects of original sin, “ There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, &c §.” —Hence then we are led to understand that expression of the prophet in our lesson [*We shall be saved*] : We, in this place, is emphatical, being as much as to say—We, who are in covenant with God, &c, who are his people, shall be saved ; notwithstanding that we have sinned, yea, have too long continued in our sins ; yet, if we confess and repent of them, (as he proceeds to do in the sequel of our lesson), we shall be forgiven.

in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way and the truth, by which we come to God, and God to us. God and man unite and meet together in Him ; for He is both God and man : Whoever therefore is in Christ, and a living member of his body, meets God there *rejoicingly* ; for God meets him graciously, as a Father, as a Saviour, as a Comforter. —Our way, or the precise path wherein we are to order our steps, is the law of God : His word is our chart, and our rule, his Spirit our guide ; his commandments, contained in the two tables, are the fences on either hand, which must never be transgressed.—Repentance turns our feet into this way of peace. Faith is the light, to direct our steps; obedience and good works, our motion, and progress, whereby we proceed from strength to strength, till we appear before the God of gods in Sion.—“Hereby shall we know, that we know him [when he meets us], if we keep his commandments.”—“Hereby shall we know, that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” [whenever we meet him].

6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

7. *And there is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take bold of thee : for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities.*

In this confession which the holy prophet makes, of the sins of the people, we see not only the corrupted and degenerate state of the Jewish church at that time, but what that temper and true spirit of piety is, which rules in good men. The prophet here, while he bewails and confesses the sins of the people, doth not exempt himself as innocent, and free from the common guilt ; but ranks himself with

them as a criminal, and a penitent; yea therefore a penitent, because a criminal; and that too in the fullest and most express words—*We are ALL of us as an unclean thing.*—And, that he might not seem to arrogate any perfection or holiness to himself above the rest he adds, *And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;*—there is none that calleth upon thy Name, &c.—From this example we learn, and from the like behaviour of *Daniel* and others, how the saints of the Old Testament assumed not to themselves the character of SAINTS, but of SINNERS; they boasted not of, but renounced their own righteousness as *filthy rags*; they gloried not in their perfection, but confessed their sins and unworthiness. Nor was this the language of the Old Testament saints only, but of the New Testament worthies also; even the great St. Paul, who had been caught up into Paradise, is not ashamed to call himself, not only the least of all saints, but the chief of sinners<sup>b</sup> (How this may be truly said by the best of men, see the Virtue of Humility, chap. xxix. and xxx.). Yea our Lord himself was numbered with the transgressors, not only by the unbelieving Jews, but (as might be proved from many passages in the *Psalms*, and the *Prophets*) by himself, as representative of sinful man, who took our sins and debts upon him, and bare our iniquities. The same humble spirit of penitence continued in the saints of the primitive times, as all that read their works must confess and acknowledge; especially the confessions and meditations of the pious St. Augustine. And for this St. Bernard gives a just and true reason: “The more illuminated these holy men were (saith he), the more they discovered in their hear those secret stains of sin, which the eye of God beholds there, and therefore acknowledged and bewailed them the more; not with a false and counterfeit humility, which thinks the quite con-

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.

<sup>b</sup> trary

"trary to what it saith, but with as great sincerity as  
 "humbleness of mind, acknowledging all their  
 "works to be impure before God, even while before  
 "men nothing appeared therein, but what seemed  
 "worthy of praise."—Not that the righteous, have  
 no internal or inherent, as well as imputed and rela-  
 tive holiness; but they are conscious, that they derive  
 both their righteousness and holiness from the merits  
 of Christ, and the sanctification of his Spirit; not  
 from their own works or deservings.—Of the first,  
 namely, the imputed or relative holiness, we may be  
 as fully assured, as we can be whether we have been  
 duly baptized: God, and his church, are our evi-  
 dence for this; He, by his word and minister; she,  
 by the same minister, and the appointed instruments  
 of religion:—And this imputative righteousness is  
 that justification, which St. *Paul* so often speaks of.

—The proof of the second, namely, the inherent  
 holiness, or actual and internal righteousness (which  
 is usually called Sanctification), is the fruit of good  
 works, or faith working by love: The evidence of  
 which to others is our example shining before men;  
 and to ourselves, the testimony of a good conscience.  
 And this is all the certain assurance we can attain to  
 in this our present state: but with this distinction,  
 which the apostle also makes; The first is properly  
 the assurance of faith; the other the assurance of  
 hope: by the first, God purifies us<sup>1</sup>; by the second,  
 we are said to purify ourselves<sup>2</sup>.—But as to that  
 assurance of glory, which by some is so much talked  
 of, and pretended to, it may indeed be the object of  
 hope; but if it be carried farther, and advanced into  
 an article of faith, it degenerates into an act of pre-  
 sumption, and is the ready way to frustrate our  
 hope; because it proceeds on an overweening confi-  
 dence of our own indefectibility, and absolute cer-  
 tainty of final perseverance; which is an assurance

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *1 John* iii. 3.

that

that none, but such as are insensible of their sins and imperfections, would ever dare to pretend to.

8. *But now, O LORD, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thine hand.*

9. *Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.*

10. *Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.*

11. *Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.*

12. *Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?*

In her well-chosen lessons for this season, our excellent church hath hitherto been instructing us in the various ways of Christ's Epiphany, and Manifestation to the world; and set it before us, as it were, in every point of view. We have here in the passage before us an occasion offered to consider another branch of this doctrine, which more immediately concerns every private individual member of the church; and therefore of great use, and no less suitable to the season. And that is, our own Epiphany, or, how we are manifested (as Christians) to God, the world, and ourselves. For it is of no small importance to understand, that the Epiphany has a double aspect, one towards God, and the other towards man; one, whereby Christ is manifested to us; the other, whereby we are made manifest to him; yea, manifested that we are in him, and he in us. This hath been partly touched upon in the foregoing remarks, wherein we observed, that by our holy covenant, and the initiatory Sacrament of Baptism, we have received a sure pledge, and indelible mark, by which we know God, or rather are known of him; that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful

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faithful people, and also heirs through hope of his everlasting kingdom. In these further words of the prophet (speaking in the name of, and personating the whole church) we are led to contemplate the blessed effects of that high relation, wherein we stand to God by virtue of our holy covenant, and that spiritual incorporation : to wit, that we are not only his *people*, but that he is our *Father*; that we are not only his creatures (we the *clay*, and he the *potter*), but his children; yea, moreover (which is a most unpeakable comfort), that this high privilege, and most intimate relation to God, is not rescinded or annulled by our sins and infirmities (except they proceed to downright apostasy, and professed infidelity); that therefore altho' we are a sinful people, and disobedient children, yet still are we his people, still his children, and still intitled to the privilege of suing for pardon, and the assured hope of forgiveness upon our repentance ; no sin whatsoever, excepting one, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost, being interpreted by the law of grace, or second covenant, as a sin unto death, provided it be confessed, and repented of. And this gracious reserve in favour of all penitent offenders, who are within the verge of the covenant, is one of the strongest pleas for mercy. Hence our prophet, after a general confession of the most flagrant and notorious sins, urges this, in those strong and most expressive terms, *Bebold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people* :—All and every one; tho' all great and grievous sinners, yet thy *people*, because we are all of thy church, and therefore included in the general act of grace, and objects of the divine mercy.

—To conclude then : In the certain knowledge of this reciprocal alliance, and two-fold Epiphany, whereby God is manifested to us, and we to him, consists that well-grounded confidence towards God, and that full assurance of faith and hope, which all true Christians have, or should have, who have rightly used, and continue to use, the instituted means  
of

of grace.—A great comfort this to them who are well instructed in the principles of the doctrine of Christ.—Who so desires to enter further into this sentiment, let him read the whole first epistle of St. John, particularly chap. ii. ver. 20. 27. 28. chap. iii. ver. 10. 19. 21. chap. iv. ver. 16. chap. v. ver. 13, 14,  
15.

*Thy holy cities are a wilderness, &c.]* Herein we see the deplorable effects of epidemical sin, with respect to the public and external state of the church; that it turns it into a *wilderness*, a mere desolation, by reducing the true worshipers of God to so small a number, that his *holy cities* (i. e. the churches) become waste, deserted, and empty. This was often the case of the *Jewish* church, when iniquity and irreligion abounded; this is too visibly the present state of our own, thro' the schisms and heresies, infidelity and profaneness, of some, who renounce her communion; and the wretched negligence and indevotion of others, even of her own members, who forsake the assembling themselves together, when she opens her gates, and invites their attendance. Yea, the very frequenters of her public service, who bring not their hearts and affections with them to the house of God, or suffer them to ramble on objects that are foreign to the duties of that sacred place; these are counted of God as absenter, and are guilty accessories to the desolation of his house. And what will be the consequence of such forsaking, such neglecting our solemn assemblies, but to be forsaken and rejected of God; to have, at length, our *holy and beautiful houses*, wherein *our* more pious *fathers* *praised* him, either shut against us, or given up to our enemies, to be *burnt with fire*, or quite *laid waste*? This was the fate of *Jerusalem* of old; and this was once the case of our own excellent church in a late century.—Nevertheless, tho' all this hath come upon our *Sion*, and we have just cause to apprehend the like judgment again; yea, tho' she should drink deep of the *cup of God's*

*God's fury* for the sins of her people, and be reduced to a desolate wilderness, and her body be laid on the ground, and as the street to them that go over ; yet shall not her enemies, or all the gates of hell, finally prevail to destroy her utterly.—God will not *refrain* himself for *these things* for ever ; but will arise, and have mercy upon *Sion*, when the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come! — “ Then will the “ L O R D comfort *Sion*, he will comfort all her “ waste places ; he will make her wilderness, like “ *Eden*, and her deserts like the garden of the “ L O R D. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, “ thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” In the mean time the church, and her little flock, are in their militant state, and in an enemy’s country, where nothing but tribulation and trials abide her : But when the day of her triumphant state shall come, as it will most assuredly come ; when her Lord and ours shall appear, at his last Epiphany, with power, and great glory, then “ shall his redeemed return, and come “ with singing unto *Sion*, and everlasting joy shall “ be upon their head : They shall obtain gladness “ and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” —Christ overcame, and was made perfect, by sufferings ; so must we.—In the mean while, possess we our souls in patience, looking for that blessed hope, when our life, that now is hid with Christ in God, shall appear with him in glory. Amen, Amen.

<sup>1</sup> *Psalms* cii. 13.











